

Transcription

Copy of the diary of Kenneth Knowlton Saxby, 3rd Battalion, 1915.

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AMC 3rd Batt
AIEF

Enlisted June 11 1915

Liverpool Camp June 15 – Oct 8th

Left Sydney per HMAT Warilda A69

Oct 8 at 5pm rough weather to Fremantle. Everyone sick first night alright afterward. Our position was right forward with ASC, ARC & IAB. By tipping cooks got good tucker. Duties, one day per week hospital & 1 day in 5, mess orderly. Didn't call at Melbourne. Rough time across Bight. Reached Fremantle Oct 15 Friday night. Adjutant said "no leave". Half the ships company pinched off via coal lighters & launches etc. One enterprising crowd took the lightest boat, which they lowered over side by means of winch & paddled off using shovels as oars. Coal bumpers went on strike till leave was granted, so we

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all had leave from Saturday morning 9 am – 2 pm Saturday afternoon. Went ashore in launch 2/ return. Wandered round Fremantle till about 10:30, train to Perth. Looked round Perth, had dinner, went out to sports Ground. Sports off so went to Zoo. Good Zoo but small. Had swim in Swan River, went to pictures at night. Caught train back to Fremantle & got aboard late that night. Left Fremantle Harbour Sunday 17th Oct afternoon 2 pm. Three weeks run across Indian Ocean to Suez. Weather beautiful & calm. Sea like glass most of way. Very hot clothes mostly hat, boots short trousers, identification discs & wristlet watches. Moustache growing fever. Everybody tried it but most left off pretty quick. Me included. Flying fishes, porpoises, occasional whales.

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sharks. Glorious [illegible, possibly sunsets] and very phosphorescent [illegible] jelly fishes look like big bright lamps. Most enjoyable trip altogether. Canteen aboard where one could get tinned fruit, biscuits, chocolate & drinks etc. Forecastle deck great favorite. Laze nearly all day in warm sun & read or sleep or do anything you liked. After tea I used to repair to a little seat under ladder leading from fore well deck to officers deck & enjoy the fine nights. Often there during day also. Officers deck open to us (AMC) so long as we didn't make the place too much of a welter. Good place during rough weather, when all forward was under about a foot of water. Mess orderly a great game in rough weather sliding to & fro along narrow service corridors with empty dishes & then skating

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& sliding back down stairs & everywhere with a dish of stew in one hand & a bucket of tea in the other. Very precarious occupation. Several mishaps.

During hot weather used to sleep on deck. Sling hammocks from rail to ventilator. Lovely & cool after stuffiness down below. Slept on deck nearly all way from Fremantle to Suez. Usual procedure upon crossing line. All officers went through the whole ceremony but men just ducked.

Passed very few ships on way. Arrived at Suez on Nov 6th. First glimpse of natives. Disembarked Nov 8th & entrained. 2nd Class good accommodation. Lovely country all along canal. Stopped at several

villages where we bought oranges, watermelons, etc. from natives. First introduction to "baksheesh". Children learn to

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hold out their hand & say baksheesh almost before they can walk. Natives fearfully diseased. Canal 90 miles long. Left Suez 2:30 pm 8th Nov & arrived Zeitoun station 10:30 pm. Eric & I told off as baggage guard & had to find the kits of our 10 men amongst about 300 kits. Found them at last except one. Never heard of since. Marched to Zeitoun Camp (about 2 miles). Had some tea & bully & camped on desert that night. Didn't get tent till 2 days after. Left in open till then. I preferred it & never slept in tent even when they came. Reveille 5:30 am. Parade 6-7 (physical drill). Breakfast in 2 spasms. (We were second spasm). Parade 9-12. Shave & brush up every morning. Very strict discipline. Lecture in morning. Dinner (also in 2 spasms). Parade 2 pm to 4:30 pm. Route march through desert any dress. Mostly shorts used. Off duty from 4:30 till 10 pm. Supposed

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to apply for leave and get a pass but very few did. Cairo about 7 miles off. Get train at Zeitoun or Helmieh station. Fare 7 piasters return. Cheap for soldiers 2nd Class. 3rd Class for natives very dirty & crawly.

Arrived at Cairo station. Get out of train, walk through entrance right into a crowd of dirty Arab boys shouting "boots a clean, boots a clean" or endeavouring to sell you canes, one of which we promptly bought & proceeded to clear them away. Very effective method. Shouting "imshee" or growling have no effect. While you are talking to one another will creep up & clean your boots. They will do it while you are not looking. Horace had one boot cleaned before he discovered it & walked round town with one clean & one dirty boot. In Cairo

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2 nights. Slums start straight off main street. Very up-to-date city in main streets. Slums very narrow & smelly. You have to cut your way through with a knife it is so thick. At first it is easy for gyppos to cheat you with the piasters, but you soon get used to it. (100 pts = £1/0/5 ½ 1 pt = 2 ½ about). Bought a native phrase book, learnt a few. Zeitoun Camp. – No water plenty sun & sand. Sand everywhere. Meals in mess shed. Route march to water taps & then half hour wait at end of queue & then the water gives out perhaps & another wait till it comes back. Then wash Dixie (mess tin) & knife & fork, wipe & put away. All belonging had to placed in row outside tent during day. Everything gets covered with sand, especially mess tin. Shaving every morning under such conditions not nice. 4 days after arriving given out on parade for us to be

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ready to move off to front next morning. Great excitement. Packed up & moved off after early brekker, at 8:30 am 13th Nov. Train to Alexandria. Went aboard SS Argyllshire 8000 tons for trip to Dardanelles. Food not too good, likewise possy. Dirty boat. Empty canteen. Consoled ourselves with thought that it was only for few days. Lifebelts worn everywhere on account of tin fish picked up crew of torpedoed Orange Prince 4 hrs after disaster. Arrived Mudros Harbour, Lemnos Island. Early morning fouled torpedo nets across harbour with our propellers. Lots of work to get them cleared. Another torpedoed crew arrived. Lots of shipping in harbour. Battleships, cruisers, transports, hospital boats, subs, destroyers, torpedo boats, tugs, lighters & allsorts. Big harbour & fairly calm. Next day packed up to go & stopped instead. In fact stopped 3 weeks. Rumours rife. All sorts. Hair-raising

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ones sometimes. Furphies originate from nowhere always on first class authority. Enough to send one mad if he listened to them all. Then food ran out & tobacco starvation rations. Biscuits & bully with occasional bits of donkey food desiccated vegetables & plum duff (back from the choppers association) Turned very cold. Snow on Peninsula. Royal Latrine Flushiliers Mess Orderly. Very crowded. Slept on deck. Very cold. Olympic, Aquitania & Mauritania hospital ships in harbour at once. Big ships. Order came to pack up. Furphies fly. Some blood curdling ones. Landed on Lemnos Island. Taken off on launches. Taken to Details Camp. Had to pitch tent on side of rocky slope. Some work & then some food. Slept at night with my feet about 2 ft above head. 13 to a tent. Most day parades. Route march again to wells. No water. Visited nearest Greek village & spent some money on figs etc.

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While on Argyllshire spent time doing fatigues & mess orderly & occasional parades. Then rest of time to oneself. Boat deck frequented by me fairly often for walk & think. For last fortnight in afternoons we had a bible class which started with 4 or 5 & ended with 24-25. Very helpful & enjoyable meetings. Eric joined us. Made several friends.

Lemnos Island Dec 5th – Dec 6th Marched from Details Camp about 2 miles to wharf where we were taken to SS Osmanieh in the HMS Waterwitch the military launch for 4 hrs trip to the Peninsula. Left Mudros Harbour about 4:30 pm 6th Dec. per SS Osmanieh about 4000 tons. We were crowded on Poop deck. Had tea of bully & biscuits, bought some tea from cooks. Had last meeting of Argyllshire Bible class. Arrived at Peninsula just after

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dark. Looked like a big city. Ablaze with lights. Afterwards found out there were lights in dugouts on side of hill looking out to sea. Occasional straff bullets. 6 unlucky ones hit going ashore. All lights out. Occasional artillery flashes & star shells. Machine guns & rifles heard now & then not very noisy. Early morning (4 am) started to disembark. Taken off in lighters. We landed at Williams Pier at about 7 am on Dec 7th. Found our Unit (1st Fld Amb) was at Lemnos Island resting & was afraid we were to be sent back. But not so. Carrying our packs took the sap to Whites Gully where we had breakfast. Hard climb. Stayed there till afternoon. Had dinner – more bully & biscuits. Selected old dugouts to rest in. First heard Beachy Bill. One or two shells flopped into our gully. Nobody hurt. Frost heard unexplained explosion over top of ridge like rifles going off.

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Some say it is the Turkish bullets exploding. Never heard proper explanation. After dinner set off again & marched back to Anzac Gully to the ADMS for orders. Here we were split up & the First Field Amb Reins. [Reinforcements] were marched off to Victoria Gully right along Anzac Cove & Brighton Beach to the 2nd LHFA. Good food for tea. Were hungry & tired. Rice & prunes & Bully beef stew, very acceptable. Slept in hospital dugout that night. Next morning set to work to dig dug outs for ourselves. Eric & I got a one man affair & proceeded to make it big enough for two. Hard work. It was on side of gully looking north. Nice little dug out when finished. Water carrying in afternoon from Shrapnel Gully, past Indian Camp & cemetery via sap or beach. Beachy bill commanded all the beach so that way wasn't safe.

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For 5 days we were digging hospital dugouts, carrying water from round Casualty Corner. Cans weighing 85 lbs. Sniper on Gaba Tepe commanded beach about 2000 yds away. He did a lot of damage. Had telescopic sights etc. First night we had a swim in water off Dawkins Pt. very cold but acceptable. Also visited Chatam's Post along beach towards Gaba Tepe. Collected necessities for out dug out from next gully & from beach. Stone jar left by fellow who was filling it when sniper nearby

got him. He ran for his life & left his water jar. We got it that night. Also got sand bags, old bayonets, entrenching tool, fire tin, groundsheets & some other old things to rig up our dugout with. Visited trenches to see friend in 4th Battn Signallers. Went up to Shell Green couple of times on duty. On night of Dec 11th about 11 pm when we were asleep, waked up & Eric bundled

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off in the most mysterious manner by the Sergeant with all his packs & blankets. Had to pull the roof off dugout to get his ground sheet. Afterwards had to put another old one back as orders were to leave roofs on dugouts. He was one of the baggage party. I had just got to sleep again when I was hauled out for a fatigue party to pack our gear and go round to pier with it, along beach. Taken in Indian transport carts. Came back & went round next day to relieve the 1st party. Came back that night & left again next night. On morning of 13th Dec. Embarked on lighters & taken to Princess Ena. Nabbed for baggage party again. Loading stores all night into hold of ship. Stole out of Anzac Cove early morning & arrived back at Lemnos that morning. More unloading & more work. Marched to Sarpy [Sarpi] Camp where we left the 2nd LHFA & joined our

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unit the 1st Field Ambulance. (Instead of going straight to the pier from Victoria Gully we went through sap up Shrapnel Gully along Walker's Ridge & down next gully to William's Pier. No casualties).

Reveille 6:30

Duties at Sarpy Camp. Early morning parade 7-8. Brekker. Parade 9-12. Route march, afternoon roll call & then finish for afternoon. Rest Camp. Visited all villages in vicinity. Hospital with influenza 4 days. Christmas billies and some (first) mail. Sarpy Camp Dec 14th to Jan 3rd 1916. Lemnos Island very monotonous. Deadly hole. Glad when packed up Jan 3rd & embarked on HMS Empress of Britain, 16000 tons 5000 troops aboard. Left Jan 3rd. Real good bunks. 1st Class saloon fitted up with bunks for 1st FA. Decent tucker but very little of it. Always hungry. As on Argyllshire Eric & I smelt out officers bathrooms & had a couple of hot baths. Some

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class. Live stock first made their appearance here. Most annoying but unavoidable. Baggage party again when we reached Alexandria after uneventful voyage. Entrained to Tel-El-Kebir Station. Disentrained & marched about 2 miles. Bivouaced in desert. In morning marched back about a mile & pitched camp. Party went to station & packed gear on wagons. Another party unloaded this end. Settled down to life at Tel-El- Kebir. Battle of Tel el Kebir 1882. Visited old trenches & battle ground. Visited village across line couple of times. Very monotonous. 70 miles from Cairo no leave. Monotony relieved by big mail & parcels. Appeased my weeks old hunger at last from contents of parcels. Food improved 8 ½ day allowance of Egyptian gov. Afterwards this was stopped

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& food consequently went down in quantity & quality. Training hard again. Physical jerks before brekker. Route marches, drills, manoeuvres & all sorts of work morning & afternoon. Met Alan Ashburn in 2nd FAB 6th Batty. Had long talk. Also met Will West. Rumours of going to France. More Furphies. Tel El Kebir 3rd line of defence on Canal. Turks expected to attack Canal. Transport arrived Jan 15th. Influenza again. Hospital Jan 20th – Jan 29th. Got leave for 15 hours on Feb 3rd. Eric & I visited Cairo. Caught 7:30 train from Tel El Kebir station & caught 9:30 pm train back. Ate our brekker in train bread & cheese. Had dinner in Cairo & had a bust up for tea in a restaurant in Cairo. During day we went in tram & saw pyramids. Hired Donkeys & rode round sphinx & Pyramids. Had photos taken. Rode back &

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took tram into Cairo again. Took electric trams to Heliopolis to 1st AGA & saw Horace & Ern Harrison who left us one at Lemnos & one at Gallipoli with Enteric fever. Very glad to see us as we were to see them. Had good talk. Scoured Cairo for technical books but couldn't get any. Got home tired but well pleased with days work.

Feb 11th Big consignment of Red Cross goods. 70 cases for 1st Field Amb.

Sunday 13/2/16 Night went to YMCA hut to hear service. When returned found our lot starting to pack. Worked all night & packed up. Couple of hours sleep then brekker & moved off 7:30 next morning. Orders had been delayed hence rush. Lived in Marquee tents (at Tel El Kebir was last time bugles were blown. After that whistles were used). Entrained in cattle trucks at station 8:30 am. Thought we were

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going to Suez to embark for France. But ended up at Serapeum on the Canal. More work unloading gear & then march through soft sand to Canal bank. Dinner. Crossed Canal & couple of miles march to camping site. Put up tents, had tea, went to sleep. Next day had great game of draughts putting up tents and pulling them down about half a dozen times. A couple of days before camp was ready. Then cesspit etc. had to be dug in sand. Soft sand, no water, route marches, shell drill as at Tel-El-Kebir at first. Then pace slackened. Signalling & lectures in morning, swim in afternoon. Hardest work was 2 m fatigue in afternoon. Missed swim then.

Serapeum 2nd line of defence. Trenches ab out 14 miles out in desert. B Section went to rail head (about 5 miles)

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Had pretty easy time. Very hot & murky dust storms. Some pretty long route marches. Good swims in Canal. Tucker good & bad. Bad when we had to depend on our issue & good when got some red cross goods. Lived in tents.

(at Tel el Kebir, amb. was divided into sections, A, B & C. I was in A). B soon went to rail head & C went to Tel el Kebir again to form 14th Field Amb 5th Aus Divn. Horace & Norman Morrison joined up again. Morri had gone sick on the Argyllshire at Lemnos Harbour.

General Birdwood gave troops an address & told us we were going to France, Hurrah!

Serapeum 14/2/16 – 23/3/16 Eric left us a day before with the transport. Kit reduced.

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Carried a blanket & waterproof in pack with overcoat rolled over top. Very little room for anything else. Packed up & left camp on afternoon of 22/3/16. Marched to station. Slept in sands till midnight. Very cold. Boarded cattle trucks & moved out at 12:30 am 23/3/16. Slept in trucks all on top of each other. Nearly got froze stiff. Arrived at Alex about 11 am, detrained & embarked on S.S. Simla about 7500 tons. Claimed our possies, dumped our kit & went off again for walk. Finally landed up in Alex. where we had a good look round (Horace, Bert & Me). Alex seems better than Cairo. Came back. Just missed getting nabbed by picket for being out of the boat without leave. We passed a picket with a mob of twenty or so he had collected & slid past quickly & nicked for our lives. Narrow shave. Some of our men missed the boat and got left. We arrived back in time for tea. Were thinking of stopping till later, but luckily

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we didn't. Boat left about 8 pm that night.

Touched at Malta 27/3/16 for orders but didn't stay. Malta very rocky. Passed Sicily 5-6 pm.

28/3/16 6 am passed Sardinia & Corsica. Slept up on deck. Boat very crowded. No fresh meat. Food not too good. Slept a lot on forecastle deck. Pretty cold. Made bed in little corner & managed to get warm about, 5:30 waked up each morning with wash a deck Johnny. The riggers wanted to wash the

deck so we had to get up & spy about it too if you didn't want to get drowned. No subs sighted on voyage, but the Simla was torpedoed on way back. Only 18 natives lost however. It's a good thing she was sunk. She won't bother any more

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troops. I'll never forget mess orderly on the Simla. It was one long nightmare. Only one kitchen & one store for the 1600 on board. Had just been inoculated too & it was raining as well. We had two days each of it. Up at 5:30 to get a decent place in the queue for rations. Then rush off to get breakfast with another wait of an hour for that. Serve brekker washup polish [forms?] etc scrub table & floor for inspection. Inspectors finish tear off for a dreary hours wait in the rain outside coalhouse & then final rush and scramble for the dinner. Serve dinner & wash up. Draw more rations at 3:30 & tea at 5:30 similar operations to rations & breakfast. Wash up after tea, roll into bed & sleep the sleep of the just. Thank goodness mess orderly day is over. It was the worst mess orderly experience I have ever had & that is saying a good deal.

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Arrived at Marseille 8:30 pm 29/3/16 Pretty cold. Packed up next morning. Disembarked. Marched through town to station. People very friendly. Left Marseilles 2:30 pm in 3rd class carriages. People cheering all along line. Bought some bread & had dinner. Bought a dictionary first chance. Came in very useful.

8 am arrived at Orange. Had a long talk with a French Lt Colonel. Got a good insight into the French character. Very simple & straightforward. French officers & men just comrades. Had tea. Changed my money into French money. Left at 10 pm. Slept on train very uncomfortable & cold. Beautiful weather next day. Lovely country. Lovely people, very friendly & enthusiastic. 31/3/16 Passed through Dijon, Chalon-sur-Soane 2pm Lyons – 4 am.

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6:30 am 1/4/16 Passed round Paris & through Versailles. Passed Greil at 1:30 pm. At this place, in passing I saw from the train window on the side of a brick wall of a factory the inscription John Saxby & Sons Ingenieurs et Contracteurs. At 3 pm we arrived at Amiens. At each station the train stopped, we used to get out & talk to the people & buy anything we wanted to replenish our larder or have a wash. Amiens is a pretty big place. Found it getting easier to talk French. The French soldiers are great talkers. Found it pretty easy to understand them. They are quite delighted if you speak to them in French. They are real decent fellows & much bigger than I had expected. Some of them were real giants. The people were real good & at several places were giving bread & drinks to the troops. We passed trainload after trainload

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sometimes French & sometimes British. We were the 2nd lot of Australian to pass that way so were not quite a novelty. Standing camps, aerodromes, Munition factories could also be seen all along the line. Sometimes one would see a train load of 75s or other artillery or perhaps some aeroplanes, new or damaged, often trucks & trucks of metal turnings from the munition factories. The country is lovely & the next best thing to home after Egypt. Women, old men & boys work in the fields of which there are plenty. The South of France seems to be much more fertile than the north.

On 2/4/16 (Sunday) 4 am we reached Hazebrouck, detrained, put our packs in a lorry & marched 10 miles to Strazeele. Soles of feet soft after Egypt & we felt that march on the hard

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cobbles. Billeted on a farmhouse just outside the town. It is 15 miles from Ypres. Our billet was in a loft over a barn which was used as the QMS Duty at Strazeele. March before breakfast. Route march before dinner & lecture in afternoon. After tea take stroll to village & talk to people.

9/4/16 We had our gas training. Went through a trench full of cl gas with helmets on. Then through a trench without helmets full of weeping gas. This was to give us confidence in our helmets & to get used to the effect of gas. Picture in MEA Service.

Strazeele 2/4/16 – 10/4/16 La Forge[?] left Strazeele 10/4/16 8:30 am Marched to Outtersteene 4 miles on towards line. Arrived 10 am. Placed in billets. We were in an old school house in a little room up the stairs. We had a fireplace as it was pretty cold here yet. Had bit of snow here couple of times & plenty

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of rain & mud. Muddy Flanders!

12/4/16 Met Paul Duncan in the YMCA hut where we used to go at night. Had two concerts there got up by Capt-Chapn McKenzie 4th Bttn.

13/4/16 Walked to Fletre 3 miles past Strazeele & visited Hugh Lambert of the D.A.C. Glad to see him.

14/4/16 Visited Bailleul a fairly big town 3 miles from Outtersteene.

18/4/16 Visited Bailleul again and went through RC Church. These churches are most gorgeous inside, although nothing much to look at outside. A lot of them have been destroyed by the Germans as those at Doulieu, Lavantie [Laventie] and Sailly.

Went to pictures at YMCA hut that night & walked home. When I got home I found Eric had arrived with the transport. I was glad to see him

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back again & we had a good bit to say. We did a good bit of route marching here & saw a lot of the surrounding country.

The next morning 19/4/16 we left Outtersteene and marched to Le Nouveau Monde a small village between Estaires and Sailly-sur-la-Lys & took up our Field Ambulance duties there. B Section went on to the A.D.S. & some took over the baths at Sailly. Our ambulance was right on the bank of the river Lys up & down which frequently passed motorboats & strings of barges laden with stores for the trenches towed by one little tug. The first day we started work we had a rush of wounded from the 9th Battn which had been shelled in their billets. We saw the place afterwards, used to pass going to & from our work in building dugouts. There were shell holes all round it, in the fields & on the road

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but it appeared to be one shell that did all the damage. It came right through the roof & exploded right over the doorway in the archway. Many were hurt by the falling brickwork. There were 70-80 casualties altogether, many losing legs & arms etc. Some died after they got here. It was highest there. Probably the work of spies who are thick all round here. You can't trust anybody. Part of the time spent here I was detailed to supply hot water for the operations, dressing shed & dispensary, besides baths. Then I worked the incinerator for a couple of days & then started the dugout building. It was 5 miles from our billets so was a gas proof bomb proof & shell proof affair for wounded. I was on it for a week, 3 days, 2 nights & then 2 nights. Pretty heavy work. The road we

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went along to our work was full of shell holes, especially one place where there must have been at least 100 shell holes on the road & adjoining fields in about 50 yds space. The shell craters were about 6 ft wide & 4 ft deep probably 9.2 shells. A Jack Johnson (42cm) makes one about 10 ft wide & 6 ft deep. All over the place are artillery positions, old trenches & knocked about farmhouses. The last week at Outtersteene I was on QM fatigue. We looked after the stores etc.

26/4/16 Visited Estaires on leave & saw church. Medium sized town.

4/5/16 Visited Saily & Lavantie [Laventie] two towns about 1/1/2 miles from us. Silly church is knocked about & some of the houses, but Lavantie [Laventie] is knocked about a good bit, lots of houses gutted & the church is absolutely finished. It is being continually

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shelled & suffers accordingly. We had several gas alarms although the gas attack never eventuated. Once we had a slight attack of weeping gas. An unexploded aeroplane shell fell into the garden in front of the Sergeants mess. Aeroplanes are very common. We see about a dozen a day. Mostly our own although we get an occasional visit from a Taube & a few bombs.

15/5/16 4 shells (77s) came over into our hospital. No damage done luckily. Don't know what Germans were firing at. They must have been strays. One burst just outside the mess room. We were all at dinner. Two burst on the riverbank & one on the road. We all wondered what it was at first. Most nights there is a pretty lively bombardment. There were batteries

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all around the dugout we were making. You thought it was a Jack Johnson bursting when one of our 18 pdrs went off 100 yds behind you & all round you. You can hear the guns at night 10 miles behind the line & sometimes 15 or so. Also the machine guns. We get great sport sometimes watching the anti-aircraft guns firing at a machine. They fire hundreds of shells at him, all around him & still he escapes. It is marvellous. A plane must be exceedingly hard to hit.

Tucker is not bad usual army camp issue, bread, jam, cheese & some meat & vegetables now & then. We eke it out considerably by occasional visits to the egg & chip shop. Eggs & chips are the only things you can buy here for a meal.

On 16/5/16 Some of us visited

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the front line trenches at the Lavantie [Laventie] post held by the RWF. I have one of their badges. We were escorted by a L. Cpl in the Welsh Pioneers. We went straight through Lavantie [Laventie] & into the communication trench past the reserve trenches & on past destroyed & desolate farm houses till we came to the front line. There was nothing doing, save occasional shells & bullets. The Germans were about 60-100 yds off. I had a peep over the parapet & we had a look down a mine. In Gallipoli the trenches were trenches & the dugouts, dugouts but here the trenches are built up of sandbags & the dugouts should be called built-ups. The trenches seem like a sand bag city. The Mining Engineers are very interesting. He let us look down one of their mines & listening galleries.

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It is all explained in various articles in magazines so I won't explain it here. It is far safer in the trenches than out of them, except of course when there is an attack on. Outside there is no protection & you may be shelled any minute, but in the trenches there is ample protection against shells. The Welsh seem a very fine lot here. So are the Canadians & Scotties. The Tommies are much better than those we saw at Lemnos & Egypt. They were not up to much at all.

In the trenches they have streets & they name them after well known places, such as North & South [?] Streets, Rotten Row, Picadilly Circus etc.

Usual days we only had about 6 patients a day. The last night we were here we had another rush but not as big as the first. They had been caught in the same

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place as the others. Poor chaps. We got a good bit of mail here & 3 parcels. Parcels are very acceptable. Had a Turkish bullet so burnt ANZAC on floor of bullet with powder. Le Nouveau Monde was one of the best places we were ever in. I for one was sorry to leave it & return to the Rest Camp

at Doulieu, which we did next day. 20/5/16 Doulieu is about 4 miles from Le N. Monde. We passed through on one of our route marches from Outtersteene.

27th May 1916 Saturday. It is just a week since we came here to the Rest Camp at Doulieu. A Rest Camp in the Military sense I where a soldier has a change of work & instead of fighting he does training. He knocks off work to carry bricks. The 3rd Field Amb. who took over our posy & whom

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we relieve here, said this place was a home. They couldn't have been used to very good places, for after a week here, we pronounce it a home indeed, but for dogs or pigs. The 3rd must be delighted with the place they are in now i.e. Le N Monde. It was a decent place.

This place is a farm house, stables & farm. The fields have been changed by building rows of sheds for a convalescent hospital as well as officers huts, cook houses, orderly room, bath room, dispensary & lots of other places to turn it into a permanent camp. But there is very little water & what there is is so bad that by the time it is boiled & chlorinated it is unfit to drink from a palatable sense although safe. To get enough water for a wash one has to pump frantically for five minutes at the one & only pump available

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which is out of order & defies all the combined efforts of the corps to repair it. So much for the water. Then our billet which is a stable on the ground floor, paved with bricks & very cold & damp. Also it is right next to the pig sty from which we get some odours which remind me of the slums of Cairo. By the way, the 1st Field Ambulance is thinking of taking the title of Divisional Billet Cleaning Corps in future. Every billet we have come to so far has been dirty & we have left it clean. Some have been mediumly dirty & some very dirty but this place was fearfully so. The pig sty smells enough as it is but when we came here I don't think it had been cleaned for a month & it hummed. Also the usual method of building farms in France seems to be to build your around a

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courtyard sort of place which is used for a manure tip & scrap heap & it accumulates filth & emits odours to its hearts content. The French farmers seem to thrive on it, but it wouldn't suit us. The town of Doulieu is about 300 yds up the road & has probably been killed by the smell of the farm houses around it because it is dead! There is nothing to do for it but be patient & to think we are here for 6 weeks they say. Furfies are alive again as to where we are going next. Ypres, La Bassee or Armentieres. Nobody knows but they all have their opinion. Eric and I were the incinerator kings up till yesterday. We burnt all the refuse of the camp. The first day as usual there was about a months collection of refuse but afterwards it was alright. Yesterday I was taken

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off the incinerator and put as messenger to the orderly room. There is not much to do. I started this diary this morning writing it from notes taken since leaving Sydney.

We got a parcel yesterday from Auntie Nell & some letters from home two days before.

Bombardments pretty free at night lately. Paper says British front is being attacked. I suppose that is it. We got our Anzac book ordered at Serapeum yesterday. It is some class & is a good souvenir of Anzac. At Le Nouveau Monde we handed in all our leather equipment & received web equipment & packs instead. It is not bad.

A line of trenches called, the Nouveau Monde post, ran along just at the back of our posy there. Since Outtersteene we have had

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motor transport ambulance cars & motorbike dispatch riders attached to corps. The drivers were Tommy A.S.C. but yesterday they were dismissed & men out of this corps took the jobs. That would have been a good job for me only I wanted to stick to stretcher bearing & so let it go. Same as with Eric & the Horse Transport. He would have liked to join that only he wanted to do stretcher bearing. Getting on well with French. The people round here being Flemish, it is not so convenient for learning, but they nearly all know it & will talk to you. Had good practice with a lady next door to the place where we were billeted at Nouveau Monde. She was a good friend to us & we often went in there for a chat.

Nothing much happened today. I suppose this will be so most days.

Forty-three

While on Gallipoli we used to watch the warships bombarding the Turkish positions. It was great & so was the noise. At Tel-El-Kebir we got our pay books back which we had given in at Zeitoun to be stamped at Cairo & hadn't seen since. Very glad to get them.

At Nouveau Monde, I had my watch repaired for 3 francs. It had been out of order since Argyllshire Mudros Harbour. Also saw Alan Ashburn. Now full corporal.

Doulieu. Hours. Get up for brekker. Do your work, have dinner. Carry on till tea time & then off. Very free & easy.

Forty-four

28th May Sunday. Nothing in morning. Afternoon walked to Neuf-Berquin 3 miles to visit DAP. Found DSC instead & had to walk to Vieux Berquin 4 miles further to DAP. Saw Hugh Lambert. Had good afternoon talking over old times. Had tea, left about 7 pm. Walked home. Saw Charlie Mills yesterday.

29th. Monday. Afternoon. Eric Horace & I went for walk to Bailleul – 5 ½ miles. Left 1:30 arrived 3 pm (about). Bought "Fragments from France" brown paper cardboard etc. to wrap up Anzac Books. Visited YMCA, where we had tea. Went to pictures & saw Charlie Chaplin. Bought Rising Sun badge & bullet souvenir. Wandered round town. Left about 8 pm & arrived home 9:30. Had supper & went to bed.

30th. Tuesday. Posted Anzac books & "Fragments of France", cleaned bike & started to learn typing. Supposed concert at night which failed to eventuate.

Forty-five

31st Wednesday. Furphy arrived today that we are to be here 6 months! Oh horror. I think we will be all dead by then. It is said to have originated from the G.O.C. who inspected our camp last Saturday. He told the Colonel & the Colonel told the officers who told the W.O. who told the orderly room sergeants who told someone at mess who promptly spread the report. Hence this alarming furphie. Big bombardment last night. Germans attacked around Armentieres. 400 Aus casualties. Wonder how many Germans? A 2nd DAPCpl (Mills) told me that they took 40,000 rounds of 18 pdr shells to the trenches last night. Rumours of the big advance starting soon. Hope it does. We may shift then to scenes of more

Forty-six

excitement!

Some of our fellows are transferring to other units. Horace is probably transferring to the Artillery soon. We are tired of this corps. There are not enough opportunities to do good work. – what we came out to do. It is possible Eric & I will get a position as Regimental Stretcher Bearers to some Battalion. Will try the 9th Battn tomorrow.

I am doing all sorts of jobs in the orderly room.

Many Scotsmen in the town. Good band. Rendered several selections tonight.

1st June. Thursday. To-day we marched to a parade about 3 miles away to see Billy Hughes, General Birdwood & Andy Fisher & a lot of other nobs were there besides a lot of reporters. Billy made a bit of a speech & we ended up with 3 cheers for Australia & one for Birdwood. Parade ground

Forty-seven

was about 1 mile from Saily so Eric & I got a pass in the morning & after the affair was over sapped off. We had dinner & then visited the 4th Bttn Saw the M.O. Capt Drummond but no vacancies & none of the AMC details would change. Likewise the 2nd Bttn. On way home saw the M.O of 3rd Bttn who luckily wanted 'one man' & we want another man to change with us. We got a note from the M.O. to our O.C. to that effect. Will parade for transfer tomorrow morning.

7 pm. Have been watching an observation balloon which appears to be adrift being bombarded. Shells bursting all round him in dozens. Can see flash very vividly. Doesn't seem to be hit. Several 'planes hovering round. Nothing doing

Forty-eight

however.

Billy Hughes rather disappointing in my opinion. Speech poor & little man. However he must be alright to do what he has done!

Horace has not got his transfer yet.

2nd June Friday. Sent in transfer but Colonel wouldn't consent. Very disappointed but will have another try soon. Nothing doing today. Tonight we went up town. Scotchies had pipe & drum band. Very good. The Scotchies here (or 'Jocks' as they call them) are a very fine lot. I feel quite proud that my Grandma is Scotch! I think there is a lot of Scotch in me.

3rd June Sat. Eric paraded before Colonel & pleaded our case. At last Colonel consented to Eric going in place of the one man if that man paraded & the Colonel approved of him. Eric went to 3rd Bttn this afternoon. The man

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is reporting tomorrow. If Eric gets away he will then claim me as an older brother can claim a younger if the latter is under 21. Some strategists. I hope the ruse succeeds.

Tonight there is to be a concert. This afternoon the Camerons marched past. They are a very fine lot indeed. The concert ought to be good.

4th June Sunday. The concert last night was very good. We ended up with an exhibition of hypnotism by a Corporal Davies of the M.T. It was truly marvellous & quite "dinkum". He the patient did physically impossible (for him) feats while under the 'flu' & besides mentally impossible things as well. He described places that neither he nor the hypnotist had ever seen, upon being asked

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questions by a third person. He described parts of Sydney & also one of our 5 Sgts homes quite correctly. He had never seen either. Also hosts of other things which would take a dozen pages to record. All of it was "dinkum" absolutely. All our doctors were present & they thought so too. The whole evening was distinct success.

It is light here till 9 o'clock now easily. During summer they say the twilight lasts till 10 p.m.

The man from the 3rd Bttn Eric is changing with, came along just before dinner & interviewed the Colonel who was satisfied & the change is to be effected. It will probably take a week yet & there is still a chance of its not going through but we hope for the best. News of Naval battle.

5th Monday. Paid this afternoon (20 francs) concert got up by YMCA in mess hut tonight. Very good indeed.

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6th Tuesday. Nothing. Wet weather cold. Eric lost his pocket book.

7th Wed. Went for ride in ambulance car. Eric heard nothing of wallet. Finish.

8th Thurs. Went for a walk in afternoon to Merville (about 5 miles) through Neuf Berquin. Town of about size of Estaires smaller than Bailleul & pretty slow. Bought cork soles & mirror. Walked around had tea & walked home. Kitchener drowned.

9th Friday. Nothing doing. Mail in afternoon 4 letters, 2 from home. Went for walk after tea. Heard noises in billets while reading. Everybody else away at concert in scramble that.

10th Saturday. This morning discovered several thefts (7) had taken place. Gave evidence before Colonel as to whispering & tiptoeing I heard last

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night. My belief it is French boys. Same who took Eric's wallet probably. Suspicions victorious against Australians.

10th Saturday. Our unit played 3rd Fld Amb Rugby football & beat them 12 to nil. Nothing doing. Letters from home (2).

11th Sunday. Rainy weather. Service by CE Chaplain at 2:30 in Mess shed. First service for some time. Very enjoyable. Wrote home. 12 mths since enlisted at Vct Bracks.

12th Monday. Wet & muddy weather. Big mail but - none for us.

Tuesday 13th. Mail closes for Aus. More rain & mud. Transfer has gone through to A.D.M.S. but nothing has been heard of it for some time. Patience is a virtue! The 3rd Bttn are now at Fleurbaix where they were before doing their second shift in trenches. We ought to be there for the next shift anyway. Fleurbaix is near the dugout we were holding[?].

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Wed 14th. Still wet & muddy. Muddy Flanders has a real meaning to us now. I have a good bit to do with it as I am continually running on messages up to the hospital or up to the M.T. or officers hospital down the road. Our transfer has gone through to the A.D.M.S. Hope he hurries up with it. I am sick of staying here doing nothing & am dying to get out of it. So is Eric.

Last night at 11 pm all the watches & clocks in France were advanced one hour in accordance with the Daylight saving scheme which has already been taken up in England. Formerly it was light here until 9 o'clock. Now it will be light till 10 pm in the mid summer.

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When it is normally light at 10 pm it will now be light at 11 pm. We will have to start going to bed in the daylight soon, in fact we do now as there is nothing to do of a night (unless there is a concert on) except walk up the street which is impossible in wet weather. There are no books to read either. I wish I could get some technical books & do a bit of fag but if I sent for them now they would arrive too late if they came at all.

Thurs 15th June 1916. Last year at this time we were wending our way along with about 100 other "marmalades" up to Liverpool Camp.

Friday 16th. This morning Eric's transfer came through. Hurrah! He is going to the 3rd Bttn tomorrow.

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They are at Fleurbaix 10 miles away now, in the support lines. The [They] do 16 days in support & 16 days in trenches & then out for rest, so I am told. Eric is going in the ration wagon which leaves here at 5:30 a.m. He will have to get up pretty early! As soon as he gets there he is going to claim me! I guess the Colonel will go mad when he gets the notice. I ought to be with Eric by the time the battalion goes into the trenches.

9 pm Just came in from an after tea walk of about 5 miles. The sun has not quite set yet. It will be light for another hour, but I am going to bed soon. The weather has cleared & so it is much lighter than it has been for some time. Boohoo Eric lost his Anzac [?]

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Saturday 17th. At 5:30 am this morning Eric left by the ration waggon. With his blankets, pack & kit bag & all his equipment he looked like a pack horse.

I got a pass for Armentieres today made out for tomorrow when Horace & I are going to take the day off & visit Armentieres which is on the firing line & about 10 miles or more from here. The weather has been beautiful today. Hope it is the same tomorrow. Our unit is playing 5th Fld Amb footy this afternoon at Steenwaerck [Steenwerck] about 4 miles from here, on the way to Armentieres.

Sunday 18th Horace finished his work soon after breakfast & after cleaning up putting on our belts & gasometers & shining boots & leggings we set off at 10 am for Armentieres.

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Just in Doulieu we met Maidment (man who changed Eric places) & learnt that Eric reached the 3rd Battn yesterday afternoon. I wonder how he is getting on now.

We walked on to Steenwerck (4 miles) & straight through about a mile further on we stopped and had something to drink there on the Grand Route Nationale No 7 to left was Bailleul & to right Armentieres. Turned to right and walked along road made of pave'. All big roads are pave' round here. Real good roads in South of France. About 3 miles on we entered Nieppe pretty big town. Before arriving here we passed road going to left to Ploegsteert (Plugstreet the Tommies call it). There was some very heavy fighting there & still is. Passed Pont de Nieppe & into Armentieres. It is about 10 miles altogether & we walked about 2 miles round the town. So we did about 22 miles altogether.

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Armentieres is a pretty big town, about 30,000 inhabitants in peace time. Very few there now. Place is knocked about a lot. The streets are all sand bagged for street fighting like Lavantee (There was a lot of street fighting at Lavantee. The Germans were driven out of that at the point of the bayonet. Lavantee is knocked about & all sandbagged too. Visited the railway station with is wrecked & desolate, all grass grown over. Picked up a bit of shell as souvenir. There are 6 canteens in the town, with reading rooms & games etc. We visited 3 of them. Saw all the shops, bought a few things, including big map of district & had two big feeds, one in Nieppe for dinner & one in Armentieres for tea, cost us 1/1/2 francs each for each meal. Eggs & chips & salad, bread & butter & coffee. Old Electric trams (not running).

Left about 6 pm. Watched some of our anti aircraft guns firing at a Taube

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from below Pont de Nieppe. Nothing happened however as he was too far off.

We walked back the same way we came stopping at 2 or 3 places for a refresher. Our feet were getting a bit sore now but they were nothing to speak of. We hopped on a lorry which we thought would give us a good lift but it turned off about a mile down the road & we were disappointed. We arrived home in good style at 9 pm with the sun still shining. We soaked our feet in Pot. Permang. soln. before retiring which hardened them. Armentieres is right on the line & is being continually shelled. Nothing happened however while we were there. We had a very enjoyable & profitable day. Just out of Steenwerck we had our photos taken (snapshot) in a private house: 6 for 3 frcs, 2 frcs deposit.

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They are to be ready in 2 days time.

Monday 19th. Early this morning B section got up & packed & at 12 noon set off for Plogsteert [Ploegsteert] on the way to St Eloi near Ypres. We will probably be following in a couple of days. Nothing heard yet about Eric's claim for me.

Owing to B Section "imshaying" we (A sec) have to "carry on" alone. I got a new job as wardsman then after brekker got another job as linen storesman (temporary). Horace & I are now installed in the store where we shifted our belongings from down in the stable. I is too damp & cold there. Looks as if something is going to happen soon with all this shifting. They say the 6th Fld Amb whom we're relieving lost 40 men recently in one fell swoop. Sounds cheerful! Slept the sleep of the just with pr of pyjamas & plenty of blankets from the store.

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Tuesday 20th. Nothing happened in morning. Wrote 2 letters. One home, one to Eric. This afternoon Eric & I went to Steenwerck & got our photos. They are very good I think for a snapshot. Tonight we had a concert given by a party of professionals. They were very good indeed & everybody enjoyed the show immensely. I know I did. I am going to bed soon although it is yet quite light. It is just 9pm & the sun is just sinking. Went to bed 10 pm still light.
Wednesday 21st. Nothing. Didn't get to sleep till about 2:30 am on Thursday morning. Horace & I were talking all the time about all sorts of things. Horace saw 3rd Battery C.O. & got him to ask our Colonel for him as a wireless operator.

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Thursday 22nd. Colonel promised to fix Horace's transfer up & he is very glad. So am I. It is a beautiful summer's day today. Warm & bright with just a gentle wind blowing.
Friday 23rd. Depressing muggy weather. Sharp rain squall about tea time. Had 2 letters from home dated April 9th. Pretty late. My claim has gone to Divisional Headquarters. I ought to be through soon. Horace's transfer is also going through. Rained hard this afternoon.
Saturday 24th Rained allnight & is raining now (midday).
Sunday 25th – Hot

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Monday 26th –
Tuesday 27th Wrote to George. In afternoon visited Estaires. Had another photo taken with Horace. Bought new identification disc. More rain.
Wednesday 28th Lecture on Gas in Scramble Hut. Haven't heard any more about transfer yet. It is taking a long time.
Tuesday 29th Went to Estaires again & got photos. Horace's no good so cut his out. Got another taken. Passed 6 ambulances full of wounded from 3rd Bttn. I guess Eric must

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have had a busy time last night. I wish I had been with him. Got 2 letters from home after tea.
Friday 30th Cold & raining again. Big bombardment last night. I wonder where abouts. It sounded as if it may have been at Fleurbaix. Am going to Bac St Maur this afternoon in car to get some more clean linen for store.
This afternoon after tea about 40 British aeroplanes flew over us, pretty high. Looks like a big raid. This news afterwards confirmed.
Saturday July 1st Beautiful day. Nice & warm with a slight cool breeze. Just the day for a picnic on Sydney harbour. Two letters from home.
In afternoon Horace & I walked to Estaires again & had yet another photo taken. If this one doesn't

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turn out all right we will give it up as a bad job. We are going to collect them on the way back from Bac St Maur in the car tomorrow afternoon when I go to the laundry for clean linen.
Last night about 9 pm a big bombardment started (around Fleurbaix or Saily way it sounds) & kept up into well into the night. The 18 pdrs gave out one long continuous rumble like a machine gun

punctuated at frequent intervals by 4.7 in & 60 pounders. Some sounded even bigger & shook the hut although we were probably 7 miles off. It is the biggest bombardment we have heard yet, I think, although we frequently get pretty lively ones.

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Sunday July 2nd Another good day. Collected photos. Not too good, but they will have to do.

After tea:- The usual aeroplane exhibitions & shooting. The sky is all covered with little white puffs of smoke hundreds of them with several little black dots that move & circle in & out of the white puffs. It seems a pretty risky game. Any clear afternoon if you like to look you can see half a doz planes kicking about and hundreds of shells bursting over the sky. Sometimes a fleet of planes go over & then the fun is brisk.

Lot of slightly wounded arrived here from 9th Batt owing to a big raid (by us & successful too). Raids are

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pretty frequent just now. I bet Fritz doesn't like them. Haven't heard from Eric lately. Wonder how he is getting on? My transfer is taking a long time. I wish they would get a hustle on.

Monday 3rd Some more aeroplane exhibitions again this morning. A couple of planes brought down in a bit of an aerial duel. Lots of shooting. Cooler today.

Big British & French push on the River Somme yesterday gained 2 miles on a front of 25 miles. Hope they keep it up! & start a push here.

A couple of unexploded aeroplane shells fell not far from the camp.

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They don't sound as nice coming down as they do going up. The sound was rather irregular so they may have big shrapnel nose caps. You couldn't guess where they were going from the sound. Lots of fellows ducked for the hedge for their lives. The hedge wouldn't stop much.

Rumour we are going tomorrow either to Outtersteene or Neuf Eglise where B section are. Rumour confirmed.

Breaking up feed in scramble hut. Very good.

Tuesday 4th. Packing up goes on apace. Just finished my work in store, inventory etc. 11 am.

9 pm. We are now at Neuf Eglise in Belgium. We packed up & left

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Doulieu about 2:30 & marched here with all packs up about 8 miles off. It rained most of the way too so it wasn't too good. We got here about 4:30 pm and got our "possies" in marquee tents this time, the first tents we have been in since Egypt. We unloaded the waggons & dumped our kits & then Horace & I went & had eggs for tea down the road & then we went on to the YMCA. It is a big tent at the bottom of the hill & is A1. We heard a very good lecture by Prof. Atkins MA on "The Balkan Tangle". It was the history of the origin of the war & was very interesting & instructive indeed & very entertaining as well.

This is a pretty lively place from all

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reports. There are 2 12" guns across the road, hidden by two cardboard houses which are very deceptive. Batteries all round us & furphies of a big attack coming off soon. Things are improving considerably.

We are about 1 mile this side of the town which is prohibited to troops. It is very much knocked about.

Colonel Welch, one of our old Majors, is in charge of the 13th F Amb which took over the Rest Station.

Horace's transfer is fixed up except for the ADMS which ought not to take long now. I wonder how Eric is getting on.

The Belgian people round here are not as good as the French. There are two races in Belgium, French & Flemish & the latter are not in favour of us & are not afraid to say so.

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They speak a totally different language & are really more German than French. Lots of them are spies too & one cannot be too careful in mentioning military matters in public. However I am very glad we are here as things are more lively.

Wednesday 5th. Drill started again. Did stretcher drill & squad drill all the morning (9:30 – 12) & then stretcher drill & signalling in afternoon. Went to YMCA afternoon & had eggs for tea at little shop. Met Alan Bond one of our Bible Class on the Argyllshire in Mudros Harbour. Very glad to see each other & had a good old talk. He is in 27th Battn & just came out of trenches last night. He says it

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is hot shop there & is hotter still where they are going next. Great rumours everywhere of the "great push" coming off. I hope I am with Eric by the time it starts. 27th Battn lost 117 men in the 8 days they were in these Trenches. Aerial torpedoes & Minnewerfers* are the worst things.

Rumours A Sec 1st Field Amb going to run a Cas. Clearing Stn at Bailleul for the big push. Am glad I am getting out of it.

Had a very nice little meeting at the YM tonight.

Thursday 6th. Hours 6:30-7:30 am Physical Jerks. 9:30- 12 noon drill. 2-4 pm drill.

Tucker getting back to bully & biscuits.

Tonight whilst in YMCA we had a bit of a bombardment (5.9 in high explosive) after the big 12 inchers.

* Minenwerfer – mine launcher

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We got our first casualties since coming to France. One shot & a couple scratched. A few other units suffered a bit.

Friday 7th. Route march in morning. Big mail this afternoon, 10 letters mostly from home.

Saturday 8th. Went to Bull's funeral this morning near Nieppe. Alan Bond came up to say good bye. He is leaving & they think they are going to the Somme, where the French & English big push is in progress. Horace's transfer came through & he is off tomorrow. Wonder how long I will be here yet. Horace is going tomorrow morning. He found out the Battery were still round Fleurbaix & is

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getting a lift most of the way.

Another move is in the air rumour says. Ploegsteert, the Somme, Verdun & Arras. It can't be them all, but any one would do me.

Sunday 9th July. This morning Horace left and I was left "lamenting". He got a lift in a Frenchman's dog cart on the main road as far as Bailleul. He will probably get a waggon from there to Saily & from there another one to his unit.

I wrote 4 letters this morning & am going to write some more this afternoon so as to get well ahead. Probably when operations start I won't be able to write much at all.

There was a very nice service at the YMCA hut tonight. The first I have been able to attend for some time & I enjoyed it. We are probably moving tomorrow to the Somme. Somemore.

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Monday 10th. Route march in morning. Nothing eventful.

Tuesday 11th July. Rose 5:30. Brekker 6 am. Pulled down tents & packed up & left 8:30 am. Marched with pack & blankets to Bailleul Station (6 miles) & loaded our waggons in trucks. Train left 1:30 pm. Had dinner in train (bully & currant [?]).

Arrived Doullons 6:30 pm (Doullens). Had some coffee & left at 7 pm. Tea by roadside at 8 pm. Left 8:30 & marched till 3 am next morning with about 1 hrs spell altogether. Some march! Everybody was done – like a dinner. I was aching all over & feel as if I had no back, just one big ache & I feel as if my feet were worn away & I was walking on the

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stumps. [illegible page folded over] of straw & slept like the dead till 10:30 am when we were pulled out, had breakfast, tea biscuits & bully (I ate a raw egg from the farm house) and left again about 12. They say we still have 9 miles to go. Yesterday we did almost 20 miles the last stretch & with the 6 miles in the morning makes at least 25 miles for the day – with packs & blankets which is not bad going. Nobody feels like marching today but we will have to do it. I am sure my pack weighs at least three tons. It was only about 50 lbs when I started but it increases in weight the farther go. Lots of fellows dropped out & others put their packs on the waggons but I am going to carry mine till I drop. (Written just before leaving on Wednesday, 12th at noon.)

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Passed through Saint-Ouen and Vignacourt & billeted (bivouaced for the time being) on a farm out in a paddock. March was about 10 miles. We still have farther to go to our destination. Passed 3rd Battn in Vignacourt but didn't see Eric also passed DAP & saw H Lambert.

8:30 Eric arrived on a visit. Was very glad to see him. We swapped news & I gave him the mail & rest of the parcels that came. He has been having a hot time with the 3rd Battn. Plenty of work. Transfer not fixed up yet. Hope to goodness it is soon. I am eating my head off to get there. Left in about ½ hr as his battalion will soon be moving.

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Thursday 13th Waited at the Olencourt Chateau, about a mile outside Vignacourt until 3:30 pm for orders when we moved off. During the day we had a look over the chateau. It is a big old place, built of white stone with orchards & forests (little ones) all around it. There are dogs & horses (fine ones) & rabbits & all sorts of things. The grounds were lovely but neglected. After leaving the chateau we passed through Flesselles and Bertangles & arrived at Allonville about 7:45, with about 30-40 minutes spelling. We did about 10 miles. Billeted in an old barn in the town. The whole of the 1st Bde is here too but I haven't seen Eric yet. Had tea – tea & bread & jam & Maconochies* & went to bed. Bed pretty hard but slept well.

*A tinned stew of turnip, carrot, potato, thin soup & a bit of meat

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Friday 14th Aroused at 6:15. Got up – very stiff but this worked off later. Did up our packs & had breakfast. Expected to move very soon but no orders came in yet so we don't know when we are moving yet. Letters from home (May 20-28th)

Tonight after tea I went along & saw Eric & gave him the letters & had a talk.

Saturday 15th Went for route march with packs (4 miles) in morning. I have a cold in the head & a sore throat the result of a "mouse" hole right above my head in the billet where I sleep. We can see Amiens from here. It is about 8 kilos. Some of our fellows visited it. Eric did. It is a pretty big town & ought to be interesting.

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Sunday 16th. Last night we had a raid from a Taube or some other allemand aircraft which dropped a few bombs & our anti-aircraft guns let fly & we had a little exhibition.

We are leaving today sometime. Left at 1 pm & marched to here, Vadencourt, 8 miles, passing through Beaucourt-s-H. [Beaucourt-sur-Hallue] & Contay. 8 miles from line. Heard big bombardment last night.

Monday 17th. I don't think we are moving today. Albert, where nearly everybody thinks we are going is about 10 miles from here. We are stationed in sheds something like those at Doulieu, in a bit of a wood. The ground is very hard & bumpy & cold & not the best of beds but we make the best of it.

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All the places we stop at are pretty dirty when we arrive & we clean them up & leave them clean. We have done the same in almost every billet we have been in in France which is a good few now, about 8. We have called ourselves the Army Billet Cleaning Corps and Army Mobile Corps (AMC) owing to our cleaning abilities and long marches respectively. We have done much more foot-slogging than the Infantry this time. We left after them, detrained before them (farther up the line) & have passed them. We did 45 miles marching the first 3 days. Paid this afternoon 20 francs & had tea in the village.

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Tuesday 18th July. Another big bombardment last night. Big guns too. It has been pretty continuous ever since we have been here, but heavier at night. They say Albert is knocked down where we are going.

We are moving today probably this afternoon. NCO's & number 4's are getting instructions now so it looks as if we are going into something.

I don't suppose my transfer will come through until we go into rest again worse luck! That will be some time now I suppose. This "strafe" is going to be a long one. I wish I was with Eric but it can't be helped. It won't be so bad if we get into something which seems very probable indeed.

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Tonight at tea time I saw Alan Ashburn & Horace. Both were getting on well & looked it. Horace has had plenty of work lately like us.

We haven't gone yet but they say we may go tonight. Hope we do.

Wednesday 19th. Not gone yet. Had a route march this morning about 6 miles. Doullens is only 25 kilos from here & we have walked about 80. For training I suppose. All the Infantry have dumped their packs & blankets & have pink patches about a foot square on their backs for identification purposes for the artillery. Suppose we will get them too.

Horrible furfie came through. We are not going into it, but are running a rest station. Oh horror, I think I will run away! (written later)

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Thursday 20th. Left 1:30 marched to Warloy 2 kilos off, where we took up a Rest Station. 3rd Fld Amb is working the 1st Brigade. We are disgusted with the war & everything connected with it.

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Monday 24th. Been very busy. Stretcher Squad for 24 hrs then off to trenches. 1st stop Albert & then to Dressing Station & then to dump & then stretcher bearing. Fritz shelling like fun up & down roads. Carries for 2 ½ miles with 2 to a stretcher. Worked all day, pretty hot work. Had rotten luck. Went over an ankle in morning. Strapped it up & it went over again in afternoon. Finish. Went back to

Dressing Station. Man at head of stretcher has all weight & can't see where he is going. No path not a square foot where there is not a big

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shell hole. 5.9 high explosives everywhere had many narrow escapes. Eric all right up to 4pm 23rd inst. This morning they say the 3rd Battn has been getting it very hot. Hope Eric is alright.

Wednesday 26th. Here we are back again in Warloy after doing our work in the trenches stretcher bearing. I went back as soon as I could walk and acted the free-lance, helping whom I could. The doctor ordered me back or I wouldn't be here yet. We were working over the ground where the advance was & it is indescribable & awful. I don't want to remember so I won't put it down. I will try and forget instead. We are lucky to be back here alive. I hear Eric is alright so that is

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alright. Just had a wash, shave & feed and feel a new man. We had 27 casualties out of 80 who went up.

Thursday 27th. Had a good sleep last night & feel better. My ankle is still sore & a bit weak but I am glad I went back again to trenches after the night's rest. Our work was from the Gordon dump to Casualty Corner & then across valley to 11th Battn Dressing Station with Contalmaison on our right. It is deserted & forlorn & a wreck. Long carry & bad road (if any) plenty of shells. Another route was round left of Corner towards Pozieres past a chalk pit. I went right on to support trenches looking for Eric & couldn't get back for a long time owing to the shelling. Front line had disappeared, blown out & the men were holding a line of shell

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holes. It was awful out there. Dead men been lying there for days all blown to bits & smelling like fury. Trenches blown in & indescribable confusion everywhere. I had a bit of something to eat in the trenches & then went back. Ankle not strong enough for bearing just then so I worked as a free-lance helping down walking cases who very often were stretcher cases before the long walk to the dump was finished.

At night the spoke. 18pdrs, 60 pdrs & big naval guns all joined in & the noise was one long roar & crash with the shriek of the shells was continuous. Poor old Fritz. He is getting it. The German prisoners (of whom we

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saw a lot) say that it is Hell. Verdun was nothing to it they say & I can quite believe it.

Now it is all over & we are back here in peace & safety it is difficult to imagine that such a place as the trenches exists. It just seems like a dream but we may be out there again soon. Although the 1st Division was withdrawn badly cut up & the 2nd Division sent in we are temporarily attached to them & may be doing more bearing. I don't mind doing another bit as they need all the stretcher bearers they can get badly.

The night work is the worst as you can't see what you are doing. The flares & star shells & gun flashes only help to blind you & make the darkness blacker than before instead of helping. Luckily the work is not so rushed as by day, most

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of the casualties having been got down. They are brought to the dump & put in horse waggons who take them about 2 miles to a Dressing Station where they are put in cars and taken to the next Dressing Station & then to the Ambulance Train to the Base & then across to England. Some of the poor boys lie out for days before they can be got in, but they all take it well & want to get back again before it is all over to be with their "cobbers". It is very touching & they are grand fellows & will do me every time although they are rough outside.

It seems hard to realise but this is just a little bit of the big push so much talked about. Our boys did well, better than

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expected. The Tommies swore we would never take the possies but they did & more, baksheesh. The 2nd Division are now to try their mettle.

The German (one-time) dugouts are wonderful. Double storied 30 ft deep. Pillars & walls papered. Electric lights, full length mirrors, beds & even pianos are found there. They have to be seen to believe that it is possible. Our boys enjoy a sleep in one when off duty. Not all the guns in the world can wake you, unless one hits you. I was in one for a while but didn't get a chance for a sleep. I slept a couple of hours on the ground with just my great coat & batteries of all sizes all round me roaring their hardest. It is a miracle I slept at all, but I did doze a few hours.

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There is hardly a square foot that isn't a shellhole. Holes vary from "whizz bang" holes about 3 ft diam by 2 ft deep to coalboxes, 15 ft X 6 ft & mine craters of course much bigger. German dead, helmets, rifles, artillery & other things as well as our own are strewn everywhere. Bombs, rifle & artillery ammunition (18 pdr live shells by scores) & unexploded whizz bangs & 12 in shells lying all around (not too many big ones, but one here & there). It is a curious sensation to be crouching in a bit of a hole while the big shells scream over & then bang, right on top of you it seems & the earth & bits of shell fly heavenwards & you get covered with dirt.

Somehow I never had any fear that I would be hit – hard I mean.

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I was hit by bits but not but not hard enough to hurt & got hit by bits of earth but nothing more. We lost about 1/3 of our men nearly all the first two days too. It quietened off towards the end.

The steel hats are a nuisance sometimes but when a big shell bursts near they are a blessing. They have saved many lives. The stretcher bearers have an easy time when there is nothing doing but my word when a push is on they do work. It is killing work too & no body can stand it for long. All the boys say they ought all to have V.C.s, but of course that is exaggerating. They only do their bit like the boys in the trenches, only it is different sort.

All along the route we used to carry we passed infantrymen & others all taking cover in the dugouts

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but we have to go on. Personally I didn't mind especially when you have a patient. You think of him all the time & not yourself & you don't notice the shells, but when you are coming back for more, by yourself it is not so good.

All the while I was up there I relied on Charity for a living. I left all my things behind, even my gas helmet & had to borrow one at Albert from one of our motor drivers. I also lost one puttee & one boot, the day I sprained my ankle & am now wearing an odd pair of boots & an odd pair of puttees. There is plenty of stuff to choose from.

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Saw the 1st Brigade marching through this town (Warloy) back from the trenches. I couldn't help thinking of the lines,

Back from the jaws of death

Back from the mouth of hell *

- All that was left of them.

On the average there were about 300-400 left out of a battalion of about 1100. One couldn't help but feel proud of them as they marched along. Cheerful, whistling & singing with German helmets & other souvenirs ostentatiously displayed. They are fine there is no doubt.

Saw Eric with the 3rd Battn & walked with him a good way gave him the home letters & swapped news etc. We were both glad to see each other well & healthy after the push. I hope to be with him for the next stunt.

* from Charge of the Light Brigade by Alfred Lord Tennyson

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Friday 28th. Worked all day yesterday on Sanitary squad & all last night in a ward full of operation cases (men minus arms & legs etc.) Feel very tired and ankle not feeling too good.

Tonight they wanted me to go on the ward again, but as it was voluntary & my ankle was sore I reneged.

Heard Alan Bond was wounded smashed arm. Nice comfortable "Blighty". He is lucky.

I haven't seen any Fritz planes round this part, ever since we came here. It is just as well because if he had caught a glimpse of the dump he would have finished us off in about ½ hr. It was bad enough

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on Casualty Corner & Suicide Valley & around the road to the Chalk pit, but it would have been 100% worse if he had got the range of the dump. He did put up a balloon for about ¼ hr which was promptly skittled by some of our planes. You can count our planes & balloons by the dozen but nary a one of Fritz can you see.

Saturday 29th July. Ankle a bit sore so am resting & writing letters. I haven't written any since leaving Belgium.

We are leaving tomorrow destination unknown, probably Belgium again, after reorganisation for another stunt.

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Sunday 30th July. Bearers stopping behind, but on account of my weak ankle, I am going with the "Sisters". I don't want to at all, but am made to. I suppose it is best after all as bearing would only damage my ankle.

Left Warloy at 9:30 am & marched back through Vadencourt & Contay & Herissart & Rubempre, Talmas, Naours, Wargnies, Havernas & stopped at Halloy near Canaples arrived there about 6 pm. I walked part of the way, but my ankle got sore so I rode the rest of the way.

Monday 31st. Nothing doing. Put up some tents. Got 3 letters from home dated June 12th.

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August 1st. Nothing eventful. My 20th birthday. Wish I was home to celebrate it. However, I will be there for the next one, surely, my 21st. Heard that bearers left behind, contrary to expectations are not doing much work. I am doing far more here and I am supposed to be here for a rest.

Saw Eric just now & had long talk. Glad to see him. Gave him letters. He has been offered a commission but intends to refuse it. It is a big sacrifice for principles. He has seen about my transfer & it ought to be in any day now. Hurrah! Things seem to point to us going back to Armentieres & starting another "push" there as soon as we are reorganised. Eric doesn't say much but from what he told me I reckon he ought to get the DCM*. They all did well but he seems to have done extra well. Wish I could have been with him.

*Distinguished Conduct Medal

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Just saw Horace & he is alright but doesn't seem to be enjoying himself. I suppose he is tired having just come out of action.

Wednesday Aug. 2nd – nil

Thursday Aug 3rd. Got "staff" job in G.M.S. Saw Eric again. Got 3 letters dated June 18th.
Friday 4th. Wrote 7 letters. In afternoon went for walk to see Eric. Saw MO & it seems as if the first claim had been forgotten & Eric had to put in another one. I am beginning to wonder if I will ever get with him. However the MO says it ought to go through in a few days now so we will hope for the best.

Had tea with Eric & the other AMC men & walked home.

Saturday 5th.

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Monday 7th Lost staff job & got another. Old job of bicycle orderly. Had a lot of running about. Went & saw Eric & transfer is going through alright.

Tuesday 8th. Moving tomorrow.

Wednesday Aug 9th. Battalion moved off this morning going back to the trenches. Just my rotten luck! Looks as if I am here to stay. We were supposed to move today but I don't think we will. 3rd Battn just went past & I saw Eric.

Thursday 10th. Nil

Friday 11th. Moving today at 2 pm. Marched about 10 miles to Herissart. Camped for night under trees. Very dirty. Saw Eric. Gave him his parcel. I got a parcel from Vera too.

At 12 August Transfer came through tonight. Hurrah! Will join them up tomorrow.

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Sunday 13th Aug. 12:30 pm. Here I am at last with Eric. Saw [illegible] alright. This morning went to Church Parade & Gen Birdwood gave out ribbons for Military Medals won at Pozieres.

Monday 14th 2:30 pm. Marched to Vadencourt & camped in same place as last time.

Tuesday 15th. Moved off 9:00 am. Marched through Warloy to Albert. Had tea moved off into trenches arrived 7 am 16th.

Friday 18th Aug. 10 pm. Here we are in a big German dugout which we are using as a Dressing Station waiting for the casualties to start coming off. There is a bit of a stunt on tonight & the bombardment is heavy.

We passed the Gordon Dump & came past Casualty Corner & up Suicide

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Valley arriving at new dump & cookers at about 7 am 16th. Things were pretty quiet. It was raining & the Ground was a quagmire & going was difficult. We slept till moving in a Relay rest dugout for bearers & moved up to Temporary HQ about 6 am & 9th Battn coming out. Eric & I & the Corps set off at 9 pm that night to take over an advance dressing station about 700 yards behind the line. Went wrong way & had to come back & then got blocked by Pioneers. Shelling all the time. Finally after a lot of trouble we arrived here at about 2:30 am Thursday morning. Cleared out dugout & carried on. Not many casualties, about 40 for 24 hrs. The temp HQ was situated in what was originally the main street of Pozieres. The country is torn up fearfully every square foot with huge shellholes traversed by saps & trenches with the remains of a couple of villages (just a few heaps of bricks

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& perhaps a bit of a wall left) & one-time woods now gaunt tree trunks smashed & battered and over all equipment of all sorts from bombs to big guns, German & ours, scattered everywhere. Also dead men in bits & smelling awfully & flies (big ones) in thousands everywhere.

Taube falling flames. Great sight.

At 2 pm this afternoon the 1st Battn moved into our part of line & the 3rd Battn moved over to left & so we had to shift. I was sent ahead to see the MO. I was misdirected & got lost & toured all round France, dodging shells & finally landed here after 2 hrs wandering. Went back right way in 20 mins &

came back with others & the gear & took over this dugout which we cleared out. It has four fire exits & is about 30 ft long. There is another about 10 yds off like it, where Capt Taylor

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is as 4th Battn MO. This afternoon I had to go a couple of trips to old Battn HQ & got lost again & had a rather lively time. I am a terror for taking the wrong turning. Paper just came from O.C. with list of decorations for 3rd Battn. Eric has got the DCM & our doc. got the Military Cross. They were both well deserved. I guess Mother & Father will be pleased.

Sunday 20th. Here I am sitting on the doorstep of my billet in Albert. The battn came out last night & Eric & I & the Corps have just arrived. There were not so many casualties this time, but it was worse in this way that we were not working hard enough to keep us busy & we took more notice of the shells. I had a little habit of losing my way & I had several extensive tours round the vicinity of the operations & had a pretty lively time generally.

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I am very tired & dirty & hungry. There ought to be some mail for us soon as the Doc & the padre got some in the trenches.

Monday 21st. Left Albert 8:30 am marched to Warloy. By working our nuts we got an officer's billet & it is some class. No mail for us although the officers got a lot. Only be here for one day.

Tuesday 22nd August. Left Warloy 8:30 am marched to Val de Maison. Big box of comforts arrived for us, the AMC 3rd Battn. There is enough for a dozen men of all sorts of things. A big case takes 2 men to carry it. It is some class & will keep us going for some time.

Eric has lost his diary. It is very bad luck indeed.

We are camped here in a big paddock under canvas. It is a nice change from dirty old barns although

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last place was A1. Only we were only there one night. Had 3 letters, one from home. Wrote some.

Eric got ribbon from Birdwood.

Thursday 29th. Left Val de Maison 9 am marched 9 miles to Gezaincourt.

Friday. Stopped here all day. Visited Doullens. Big towns interesting.

Saturday 26th. Left 3 am marched to Station & entrained. Left at 6 am 7 hr train journey & then detrained at Houpatres[?] near Poperinghe, 4 miles behind Ypres. Marched to Toronto camp (about 4 miles) just vacated by Canadians.

Sunday 27th August. Nil

Monday 28th. Walked about 5 miles to baths & had a bath with the Battalion at the Divisional baths near Poperinghe. In afternoon came down with Eric. Lucky for them to have one as they had to stop behind on account of a sick parade. We will get into see Poperinghe if possible.

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Tuesday 29th August. Yesterday afternoon we spent in Poperinghe. It is a fairly big town & interesting. Looks as if there was a bit of street fighting there. We went to the Pictures & had tea there & came home by a shorter route.

We are billeted here in an old Camp formerly inhabited by Canadians who have now gone to the Somme. It consists of huts & is called Toronto Camp & is near village Oudendorm. It is raining a lot lately.

Tuesday 5th September. Me voici encore. We are in the trenches & this is our 5th day. We have 3 more to do here & 8 in supports.

I haven't been enjoying myself this time. I don't think my stomach has recovered from the Dirt & Bully stew we had at Pozieres. It is very much

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upset. The weather is cold & wet & everything is muddy.

We moved off from Toronto Camp on the afternoon of 30th Aug & marched to railway about 4 miles & entrained in armoured train to just outside Ypres. Then we marched from there through Ypres to an old Railway embankment in the side of which were lots of good dugouts where we camped for the night with our helmets at the alert.

Ypres is a city of the dead. It is a very big city & once was very beautiful. Streets & streets full of big houses & shops & big public buildings all knocked down & in total ruins. It is a very interesting sight. From the lights peeping from the level of the pavements it looks as if it were inhabited by soldiers living in cellars & dugouts among the ruins. We marched right through the city & out & round to the railway embankment where we stopped all next day & moved up that night.

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Thursday 31st Aug. We arrived in the trenches about 9 pm when we relieved the Tommies. This dugout is very good & big & one of many dug into side of same railway we were in last night. Here it is a cutting & the front line is straight ahead about 400 yds. Dugout is about 10' X 40' X 6' high. It was half full of water when we arrived & very untidy as was everything else as usual. We bailed out & cleaned up. We now have a pump & we pump her dry twice a day. There is a bit of a spring under the floor. There are not many casualties so far but that may alter any minute. There is a good bit of shelling goes on & this cutting received its share especially H.Q. about 100 yards up & a corner about ¼ mile down. The two practically new features of this place are minnewerfers (Minnie "wouff"ers we call them) & gas both largely used here & extremely unpleasant.

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"Minnie" is a big canister bomb filled with high explosive & is about the size of an oil drum with a tapered nose & a bomb as a detonator. She does make things hum when she goes off. Stout as this dugout is, it shakes & the candles go out whenever one lands within a hundred yds or so (more if anything) of it. This we were told is also the home of the gas attacks & though it is pretty quiet now it has been the hottest in the line. It must have been some class. All wounded have to be evacuated at night. Snipers are pretty active. The old tin lid is a boon & a blessing. We got a big mail the other day & enjoyed ourselves immensely.

There is a lot of mining goes on round here. It seems "some" job, burrowing like moles down into the earth (as much as 100 ft) & along & up & sideways, listening for Fritz all the time & never knowing

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what minute he may blow you up. They lay mines up to hundreds of tons of explosive, blow them up & then our men & Fritz have a fight for the crater. It is funny sort of warfare.

Some of the mines take 6 months to dig & they all run well into [illegible?] three months. Just now there is one nearly finished they say. Only about 6 weeks to go & they have about 70 tons of explosive in her now. The only fly in the ointment is that they think Fritz is a bit ahead of them & they may be blown up at any time. The miners say that they don't want to be within 3 miles of it when it goes up. I wouldn't either. Nowadays war seems to consist of throwing big shells, bombs, "wouffers" at each other & sending gas whenever favourable. The rifle is used mainly for sniping & the bayonet for toasting

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bread & catching rats, opening tins & chopping wood. The men in the trenches serve as cannon fodder. An army consists of plenty of artillery with plenty of bombs of all sizes, rifle grenades, machine guns, snipers, gas, liquid fire & cannon fodder. It is mere machinery & the effects are awful. Even the ground will take a long time to recover & humanity will take longer.

There are plenty of rats here. Hundreds of them some as big as baby rabbits & you hear them fighting & squeaking in the dark. In the trenches they run over you & bit you although I have never had them do that. We have water frontage in the shape of a dirty stream of rain water running down the cutting.

The miners' saps are just big enough to crawl through on hands & knees & one man works at a time. They go for a couple of miles out under Fritz

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supports & behind that. One of them is after a battery of big 17" siege Howitzers. Hill 60 is just in front of us.

Thursday 7th Sept. We are moving out tonight to supports.

Friday 8th. In some dugout in Railway in Reserve. Cleaned it out & put new wire on bunks. It needed it baldy but is A1 now.

Sunday 10th Sept. Last night Eric & I came back from the trenches in an empty ration limber to the Transport. An order from the ADMS says that every water cart must be accompanied by an AMC man to see that the water is properly chlorinated so Eric & I are taking first go with our two water carts. It is a very easy job in fact it doesn't keep one

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going for half a day & we have practically nothing to do. It is what is called the softest of soft jobs. The order will probably be cancelled soon as I think we are practically wasting time here. However it will do me for a while, so long as there is nothing else doing. We get our rations from the Transport & today we had the feed of our lives. We had roast potatoes & meat and flap jacks for dinner as much as we could eat & tonight we are having blanc mange. We found a tin of corn flour & I boiled water in my mess tin over a candle with rag wrapped round it, added some condensed milk & sugar & made the blanc mange. It is cooling now & we are going to have it for tea.

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Poperinghe is not far away & we will have plenty of time to visit it. I am going to buy something as presents for those at home & a souvenir spoon for Vera to add to her collection. Had our photos taken.

Tuesday 12th Sept. Yesterday afternoon we visited Poperinghe & went to two picture shows & had tea there. The shows were good & we enjoyed the afternoon. I've got the souvenir spoon of Ypres. Our duties here are to make 2 or 3 trips with the water cart & fill 70 odd 2 gall. petrol tins with water. When we are finished we get fed real well & altogether we have fallen right on our feet. Got letters from home (July 9th & 17th), also from Auntie Nell, wrote Jean there

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Erica, George, Neil & Colin & Gina & Gpa [name illegible?].

Packed up & left about 4pm. Came with transport to new camp about a mile the other side of our old Camp (Toronto).

The Battalion is coming out tonight & will get here about midnight. They arrived at 4 am on 13th.

Friday 15th Sept. Weather very wet & cold lately. We are camped in same sort of huts as before tho AMC have one to themselves as Sick Inspection Room & living room. Nothing much doing. Leave starts soon but we are miles behind. We are sending our souvenirs in a tin box across with one of the AMC when he goes on leave & he will send it home by Cooks Agency.

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Wednesday 20th. Left. The last few days have been cold & wet & things are pretty dull. There is nothing doing except the usual sick parades & dressing. We had a route march round through

Poperinghe & back & a gas lecture to break the monotony. We have been issued with the new bare respirators which are the best we have yet had & the others were pretty good.

Friday 22nd. Left. Yesterday we had sports which were very good & we finished up with combined concert & cinema show in the YMCA hut some distance away which was also very good. Weather is a bit dryer & we are going into the line again in a couple of days.

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3:30 pm Bit of excitement to break the monotony. Two bombs exploded accidentally at two different places. Luckily only 2 men were hit & they were not serious, but we thought that there was a dozen injured by the cry for SBs & a doctor that went up we were quite surprised but real thankful when it turned out that only two were hit.

Sunday 24th. Eric & I & the Corp went into Poperinghe to the Baths, where we had a nice hot bath & a clean change. Then we went into the town, got our photos which were pretty no good, went to the pictures & had eggs & chips for tea & set off home. Near home we dropped into a YMCA hut & heard Captain Chaplain Donald McNicol give a lecture on

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'Echos of South Africa'. It was real good & we enjoyed it. He is a real scotchman & a real man & his lecture was A1. We came & went to bed.

Today we attended a Brigade Service & Andy Fisher was present & Gen. Birdwood gave out some more medals. 5 of the 1st Fld Amb. got Military Medals. It was a good service.

Tonight we went to our YMCA hut to hear Capt McNicol again. He was to give his farewell address as he was going to Australia. We had singing of hymns first which were A1 & I enjoyed myself immensely. Then the Capt started his talk. It was the best talk I have ever been privileged to hear & that is saying

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something. It was a man's talk for men & straight from the shoulder & he had everybody's rapt attention all the time. It was simply great and at the end he asked if anybody would get up & make the Great Decision "Give Him a fair Trial" he said & many did so. I got up & signed one of his papers because I knew it only needed one to start for others to follow. There were about a dozen altogether which wasn't bad at all for soldiers. Altogether it was an evening very profitably spent. I wish he were our padre although the one we have is pretty good.

Monday Sept 25th. We are moving off tonight. They say we have 32 days to do altogether in front line & supports.

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Monday Sept 25th. 6 pm. Here we are all fallen in on the Battn parade ground in full marching order, packs, blankets etc. looking like a Human Camel Corps. We are marching to the station about 6 miles off escorted by the band where we will entrain for about 1/2 hr & then march through Ypres to the line another 3 or 4 miles. It is a different part of the line this time to the left of the old position. Link & Bob are stopping with the transport this time.

Tuesday 26th. Things didn't happen just as we expected last night. We left. We set off about 6:30 pm & marched about 3-4 miles to the station (same as last time) & entrained. The train was packed with 12 to a carriage & there was still 12 men to be put in somewhere

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& I was one of them. We took one carriage each & tried to squeeze in. I tried 3 compartments before I could find one where I could squeeze in. It was very funny. Me wriggling & squirming to get in the door & the Corp. behind pushing & trying to get me in. I made one attempt & failed & then I took off my pack & without it was able to be pushed inside & then my pack pushed in on top of me. The

growling done by the rightful occupants during the operation was marvellous. During the ride, which luckily lasted about ¼ hr I was standing on on [one] leg, half in & half out of the window, not able to move. When the train stopped we all bundled out (it was pretty dark & it was half an hour before we found ourselves again).

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Eric had had the same experience. When we were all sorted out we set off in the dark stumbling stumbling along with our packs, single file & kept going turning a couple of times & getting lost a couple of times & wishing we could all lay down & sleep. At last we arrived at the old ruined Chateau which was our destination. A guide took us (Eric, I & Harry) around to our dugout & we turned in & slept the sleep of the just till about 9 am this morning. We were very thankful to find nice wire covered bunks here made by the previous occupants. There are guns all around us, and last night & this morning off & on, Fritz has been shelling around

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here searching for the guns. Luckily the [they] mostly burst some couple of hundred yds from us. These guns must be annoying to him because he has already expended a vast amount of ammunition on them to no effect, although there are plenty of bits flying around. We have a little "Elephant" dugout underneath the ruins of one of the outhouses of the Chateau. It is constructed from semicircular steel plating, corrugated & is about 6 ft high & 12 ft long by about 9 ft wide. It is a nice comfortable little place. All around here are the ruins of old farmhouses & trees broken-down. They say we are here for 12 days & if so it will do me. We ought to be very comfortable here with such a nice little dugout, we have

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a wire cover for the door to keep the rats out at night. (They are very bad & very big around here) also a hessian cover for the door to keep the light from shining out at night which would be seen by the enemy & would result in shelling. The door is about 4ft high by 2'6" wide. Gas alert is on & I suppose it will be so most of the time here. The new helmets are much better than the old ones. All under the Chateau itself are dugouts & cellars & they are all over the grounds as well. 7 pm Here we are sitting in our dugout after tea reading, writing & playing chess (Eric bought a leather chess board (pocket variety) & chess is all the go. It is about 7:30 & is getting dusk. The

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guns are still going strong at intervals. They seem to be pretty lively round here. After a read etc. I will turn in. We haven't had much to do today.

Thursday 28th Sept. It has been pretty quiet so far. We haven't had much work to do. Two sick parades, one with A & B coys up the line a bit & one with C & D coys not far from here.

Friday 29th.

Saturday 30th. This morning I took a sick man to Hospital to the 2nd Fld Amb which is in Ypres about 200 yds up street across the moat. Ypres is right East of us about a mile direct, but it is 2 miles to the ambulance by road. All along the road in are shell

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holes & destroyed buildings & Danger notices. The town itself is utterly destroyed. This a great pity. Every afternoon our guns have a bit of a bombardment. The guns seem to be going all day but Fritz gets more than he gives. Horace Knight visited us yesterday & he said that it was a Divisional order for the Artillery to fire 20 shells to every one that Fritz sends over in order to keep our position inviolate. There are great rumours in the air & they seem pretty true that the Germans will shortly fall back along the entire front. In fact he has already started to do so. Things are going very well on the Somme from latest reports. We will

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probably have another go there before we have finished.

Sunday 1st October 1916.

Yesterday afternoon Horace dropped in again & stopped to tea, also to sleep & then to breakfast this morning. We were very pleased to have him & had a good time. We have to fill the water cart each night now by pumping it from the well into the tank. It takes about 2 hrs pumping & then we chlorinate it. This morning went with the Doctor up to the other companies to hold sick parades there. We left about 10 am. Struck off to east till one go to main road, turned to left & then to right of Bedford House where one of our companies is. Had sick parade & continued.

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Visited two strong posts & then A & B Coys on the Ypres Canal. Their HQs are on bank of canal near a Lock. The canal is dry & full of weeds. All along the first part of the way, bits of shell were dropping all round us from the aeroplane shells bursting right above us. We had sick parade at the Lock & then came back. The doctor stopped at Bedford House for dinner & the men there fixed me up with something to eat at the same time. It was about 2:30 pm when we arrived back.

The name of this house is Swan Chateau.

At night went to Bedford House for a reply to a

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a message the Doctor sent from there that afternoon. The way was rough & twisty & it was pitch dark & I didn't have a very pleasant time but got back with no mishaps. Wrote home dated Sept. Tuesday 3rd October.

We whitewashed our dugout this morning while Eric was up the line. We used, used-up carbide mixed with water, but it doesn't look a great success. Such a splashing & slapping that we had too & such a mess we succeeded in getting ourselves intoo [sic]. We had our bunks etc. covered with sand bags so they came out alright. I am afraid it is not much of a success we did it to make the place brighter & more cheerful. Is was (& still is to a

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large extent) black & very dark inside even by the brightest daylight.

Wednesday Oct 4th. Weather turning wet & cold anti-frostbite grease in great evidence. Lot of trouble with water. There are 2 wells, one is no good on account of bad water & the pump is generally out of order in the other & we are having a lot of worry with it. We have had to have a cart brought up from the transport two or 3 times to tide us over.

There is nothing much doing. Chess is still going strong.

7pm. The usual nightly bombardment is on. All the guns around us are trying

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to see who can make the most noise. Poor old Fritz doesn't seem to have a look-in. His shells are few & far between. We get a few round here each day, some close, some far away & a few at night in reply to our bombardments but that is all. I don't think he has many guns on this front at all now.

Saturday 7th Oct. Last night the Captain left on leave for England "Blighty". Today we have Capt Stack of 1st Fld Amb, once MO of 4th Battn as our MO till our own Doctor comes back.

This afternoon we are moving up the line. We have an awful amount of gear to carry. I don't know how we will do it. There are several boxes & drums of Kerosene extra,

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Alexandria – Marseilles

SS Simla an unspeakable old tub, crammed beyond all human or soldiers endurance. She was torpedoed on return voyage. Good idea. She won't worry any more soldiers. Tucker medium, no meat at all. Mess orderly a nightmare. Innoculation leaves unpleasant memories. Hospital quarters real good but unluckily of no interest to us. Sleep on deck in little nook. Very cold but li used to be warm. Wash a deck Johnny at 5 am very morning. Lot of rain & very glad when voyage ended.

Trains

Egyptian trains cattle trucks.

French “, 3rd class carriages.

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Billets in France

Generally store barns of a farm house. Earthen floors. Brick walls for a couple of feet & rest lathe & plaster i.e. thin sticks plastered with mud. Sometimes we get sheds & sometimes we get real camps with rows of huts. Once we had tents & once a room in a house.

Yesterday Horace popped in again & as usual the quietness gave place to pandemonium. He blows in like a hurricane & stops to tea etc. & then blows out again. He reminds me of the times when Eric used to come down from the country for a holiday. We enjoy his visits very much.

Finish part one another thrilling instalment next week.

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Lemnos – Alexandria

RMS Empress of Britain

16,000 tons. Accomodation 5000.

Bunks lovely, tucker, quality good, quantity rotten.

Mess orderly a bad job. Feeds in two spasms. Baths (hot & stolen) in officers bath rooms. No lights, no smoking, submarine danger & lifebelts always handy. Physical jerks on deck. Daily inspection, rest of time to ourselves. First discovery of lice, or chats as they are called. Now old friends but very unwelcome also indestructible & unget-rid-of-able. No bon for soldats compris? Quick voyage. Boat well armed. Several machine guns & other bigger guns often a big 6” gun on stern. No bon for submarines!

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Occasional heavy shelling & always some going on. First light casualties. Plenty of our planes, few of theirs. Gas alarms very frequent. This is home of gas attacks. Line in bad repair as usual. We fixed it up satisfactorily. Our guns predominate as in Somme. In Flanders about equal Canadians were round here but now Australians & Belgians. Have seen few French soldiers except down south during train journey. People all speak pidgin English & we speak pidgin French & so we understand one another. For miles each side of actual firing line desolation & ruin reigns supreme. Outside this people still live

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Sydney – Suez

HMAT Warilda A69. Very nice clean little boat. Good quarters, nice company. Good tucker (paid cooks for it). Nothing much to do. 1 day a week in hospital & 1 day in five mess orderly. Rest of time read & lie on deck. Sleep on deck at night in hammocks. Very nice trip altogether. Good weather, blue sea, flying fishes, sharks, whales, jelly fishes phosphorescent at night. Concerts good time. SS Argyllshire. Alexandria – Lemnos. Bigger boat but very dirty. Submarine danger. No tucker, no stores, no baccy for the smokers, no nothing, no books to read. Very cold wet & windy. Royal flushilers job. Freezing. Cold at night. [?] aboard. Relieving feature Bible class.

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France

Train ride: - White roads winding over gentle green slopes. All shades of green. Country very pretty & fertile. Many villages & some big towns. People very friendly & enthusiastic [sic]. Cold at night but beautiful weather by day. Mountainous country in south. Passed through about 12 tunnels some very long. Lovely French bread.

Flanders

Cold wet with splashes of lovely sunshine. Mud route marches, little villages, trees, hedges, field, cattle, manure heaps, smells, bad water. Abundance of coffee[coffee]. Eggs & chips. Little shops everywhere. People

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nice. Tommies everywhere nice & friendly but poor & uneducated mostly. Thought we were Austrians & half savages. Route marches, physical jerks & lectures. Gas instruction. Fairly quiet & uneventful life.

Somme. Long weary marches, full packs. Aching backs & feet, good sleeps on hard floors, bad tucker. Pozieres, shell torn ground. Shells, gear, dead, smell, great excitement, hard work, great satisfaction when finished & pride in the boys. Fast like aeroplanes etc. Plenty of ours & few of theirs.

Belgium. Old firing line, old shell holes, old destroyed farms & villages. Ypres city of dead. Lots of night work taking over. Lots of mud, mud, mud & rats, rats, rats, & cats & destroyed chateaus & trees. Big well built dugout.

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Lemnos

First impressions of Lemnos was a big harbour filled with warshipping & the island, bleak & bare with several big military camps in tents in the distance. On the island we took several long walks visiting little Greek villages perched among the rocks with their farm land below them. Used to buy oranges, figs, chocolate etc. Oranges very plentiful here as in Egypt. Island covered with soldiers. White tents in rows & rows everywhere. 2 parades a day. Afternoon free as we were resting. Water very scarce tucker medium. Christmas day not much chop. Weather cold & wet generally. Some good days. Greeks dress in funny floppy pants & short coats & sheepskin but velvet clothes popular.

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Gallipoli

Barren, scrub covered ridges & valleys, with strip of beach. Everywhere you went you had to climb. Little rabbit burrows of dugouts. Good tucker only no bread. Hard biscuits bully beef fat lamps, scanty clothing, hard work digging dugouts filling sandbags & carrying water. Few casualties. Bullets whistling overhead. Beachy Bill firing often on beach. Several bombardments by warships. Indians & mules transport. Trenches very deep & very narrow dug in hard earth. Little dugouts in side of trench for men to sleep in. Cemeteries, two big ones & isolated graves. Hard work packing up & carrying gear round to beach to be loaded on barges & taken away.

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Leather cover

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Egypt

Land of the 'Gyppos'

Impressions

Sun, sand, dirty niggers, mud houses native villages, fields, bullock ploughs wooden machinery, wells, donkeys & bullocks. 'Gyppo' corruption of Egyptian means the arabs really & not the

Egyptians. Egyptians are mostly better class. Arabs low class, diseased mainly dirty beggars. Dressed in any old clothes they can get, European, native or military. The true native dress is a long loose robe belted round the middle.

Life in Egypt:- Camp life. 3 parades a day, lived in tents, nothing much to do, visiting native villages, taking walks, mostly our time off duty was spent in our tents. We had big marquees at Tel-il-Kebir & bell tents at Serapeum where we also had swims in Canal. Drills, swims, ration fatigue, mess orderly etc.

Brothers and sisters

Eric John 1893-1962 Born Bathurst NSW

George Jacob M. 1894 - 1967

Kenneth K 1896 Stanmore on Enlistment form, Marrickville on BD&M

Jeanette E 1899-1945

Irene A 1902

Noel H W 1908

Colin A 1909

Parents George Campbell & Agnes Rachel