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No 5533 K.K. Saxby AMC 3rd Battalion, 1st Inf Brigade, A.I.F.

Diary Ctd.

October 8th 1916. This time last year we were just leaving Sydney. Now we are in the trenches at Ypres a bit to the right of Hill 60 where we were last time. The trenches here are in a much better condition than the last place we were in. As usual we had to attend to the sick of all the units round about. We used to hold sick parades each day going the round of the companies.

The dugout we were in was tumbling down so they built us a good new one just behind us, but we moved out of the line the night before the day it was finished. The other one had to be propped up by beams of wood which filled up most of the dugout. Things were not too comfortable altogether. This part of the line was called "the Bluff".

Our battalion had a raid while we were in the trenches which was pretty successful. There were raids all along the line that night.

Eric & the Doc went up the line to an advanced aid post in the trenches. Harry & I were left behind. Promptly to time our artillery opened up on the Bosch

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trenches for 10 minutes then shifted onto his supports. Just then our boys hopped over (60 of them, bombers bayonets etc with signallers engineers etc complete). Harry & I sat outside our dugout & watched our bombardment in the dark. It was great but we went inside when the first of Fritz's shells screamed overhead. Our artillery gave our fellows 20 min in the Bosche trenches to do their work & get all information possible & then switched back again to the front line. By that time all our men were back. We had 8 casualties including one missing. Fritz had about 20 or more & we got some information. It was a job patching up the wounded. Every one of the raid was all scratches & all had their face & hands blackened which had to be cleaned before their wounds could be attended to. The missing man turned up a long time after.

We lost our dog which we had had several days. We had him tied up & when the shelling started I brought him in. Then when we got busy with the wounded he nipped outside & never came back in the time. Day after the raid we left we had about 20 casualties.

Thursday 19th October 1916.

At present we are billeted in an old Chateau that was once a German millionaire's residence. Lately it was a hospital & now it is used for billeting troops. It has a large lake & grounds & is or was a fine old place like many others. We have been here three days now & are probably moving tomorrow. We have been into St Omer twice which is about 7-8 miles away. We went by car & motor lorry in which we stowed away. St Omer is out of bounds. It is a big place a real city with big shops etc. & we had a good look around. The lorry is driven by Hugh Lambert and his brother. He went to the Tech with me & has been in France 14 months. He was attached to our Battalion for 5 days for transporting our blankets etc. & went back home to the Ammunition Park he belongs to this morning. I had several trips in the lorry which were A.1. One day went for a great tour all round France. It was great and was sorry when we went back.

The night we came out, I went ahead with our gear taking it down to the transport in a truck on a light railway which runs from way back at the dump up to the trenches. The transport met us about 2 miles behind the line & I transferred our belongings to the waggon that to the camp. Dominion Camp where we left to go into the line about 8 miles. We had some hot cocoa half way at a YMCA hut in a town. It was A1 & just what we wanted. We stopped at Dominion Camp where we gave in our tin hats & Box Respirators & then marched to Steenvoorde Where we stopped some way outside the town for the night & next day went on to Arneke about 14-15 miles. This was the day I went joy-riding round France in Fat Lambert's lorry instead of marching & nearly got pinched too but escaped by good luck. Hugh was attached to us for some time. We were billeted in a farm that night & next day we marched some 15 miles passing through several villages & a pretty big town called Watten where all the inhabitants & school children turned out to see us attracted by our band who were blowing their hardest. We made a great stir. The side drum player played so hard he put his sticks through his drum. We didn't mind that part of the march, but the rest was pretty tough. Nearly everybody was done & the sick parades the next few days averaged about 90 (we usually get 20-30). Most were from sore feet etc & we were kept busy from 7 am up till 10 or 11 am having our breakfast & dinner combined. Our old Doctor came back from leave this morning & instantly the number of sick dropped to 40. He is an old hand & is not so sympathetic to all their tales of woe about mysterious aches & pains all over. He knows them too well. The other chap was too sympathetic for a R.M.O.

The night we lobbed here we were put in a farm and the AMC got an old fowl barn very dirty & small & draughty but later that night we shifted to here in the Chateau. Our posy is in the basement. It is pretty dark & cold but better than a dirty fowl barn.

Friday 20th Oct. We are going into action again shortly. We are moving off tonight at midnight.

Sunday 22nd. We arrived here yesterday afternoon. It is a little town nestling at the foot of a green tree covered hill. It is rather pretty for a French village. There can't have been many troops through here lately as we can buy all sorts of things even bread. We had a good tea last night of fried steak & green peas. It went down quite easily. We have two little rooms in a house one for a sleeping room & one to hold sick parade in & are very well off. They wanted to cram us in with about 20 others into a space not much larger at first but we found this place out for ourselves.

We left the Chateau at 2 am & marched to St Omer station (8 miles) where we entrained & left at 5:30 am. We were crowded into cattle trucks about 30 to a truck & it was fearfully cold & we were hungry as well as our rations had been left in the cart by mistake. We passed through Boulogne, Etaples, St Valentine & detrained at Longpre. When we sighted the sea at Boulogne we all raised a cheer & everyone had rosy visions of Blighty which were shattered however as the train went on. It was an awful sell. We all knew then that it was the Somme again for us. We marched about 3 miles from Longpre to here, called L'Etoile. So far we have had the band on our marches which is very helpful.

The Transport packed up & left this morning. The [sic] say we are going tomorrow on motor buses. Some class!

Monday 23rd. We packed up & marched about 2 miles to the buses which were French ones. We were all laden with extra gear on account of the transport having gone & besides that we carried a sick mans gear as well so we were pretty well laden & the 2 miles seemed more like 20 when we got there. We had a lovely ride, 30 to a bus right through almost to Albert, passing through Henencourt & Amiens & a lot of other towns. The country was lovely & a great sight to see. We passed the whole Division's transport

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on the road. Saw some big guns etc. Saw no "Tanks" yet.

Tuesday 24th Oct. Here we are about 40 of us sitting down in a little tent big enough for 20 all packed up waiting for the word to move. We are somewhere in France & we think we are also somewhere near Fricourt. It has been raining ever since last night & everything & everyone is covered with mud. It is cold & wet & dreary but luckily we can see the humorous side of it & manage to keep cheerful. We had an awful march last night. I will never forget it. After leaving the buses we set off across country for an unknown destination an unknown distance away. We were carting our tucker box, medical stores etc & were well laden. We were just about finished when we struck our transport which had left a day before us & we promptly dumped our surplus gear on a waggon. I was left to guard it & follow the waggon. It is just as well I was or we would have lost it all. The others had a bad time but I guess I was worse. After I started following the waggon we struck an awful road. It was in parts knee deep in mud all humps & hollows & fuddle holes & it was pitch dark & the waggons bumped over them all & every now & then something bumped off & I had to run back & get it & then gallop ahead after the waggon to put it on again. A couple of times I felt absolutely dead beat but kept on as the stuff we had on the waggon was very important (it included our tucker bag which I retrieved several times). Half way along I had a bit of an accident which made things harder still. In the dark the following waggons ran into the one I was behind & jammed my leg between the back of the first wagon & the pole of the next. I thought my leg was done for but luckily nothing serious happened although it was very sore & stiff & hard to walk on. It is worse now & I am not looking forward to this next march. I hope it is a short one. I was just about done in when we arrived at our destination & I found out where the AMC was camped & carried the gear over there. My leg was feeling

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very stiff & sore & the [sic] was very little room to move about in & it was some time (and a very unpleasant time too) before I found myself in "bed". I didn't pass a very nice night & we were routed out at 6:30 am this morning (it was about 9 or 10 pm when we turned in). We had a scratch breakfast (like the last 2 or 3 meals we were too tired to have tea so missed that).

The whole 4 Australian divisions are on the move together. Their transport convoy was 6 miles long & the men were all brought along in motor buses. I wish they had brought us a bit nearer our destination. We had about 8 miles last night which seemed more like 18.

This place is where the "push" started from. The line is miles away & we can hardly hear the guns. We have rumours here about Bapaume & Peronne having fallen. Hope it is true. They reckon our 5th Division took it, but we don't know for certain.

The march last night was nearly as bad as the one we had from Doullens last Somme stunt only not quite. That was the limit absolutely.

Thursday 26th Oct Been here 3 hrs Time 7"30 pm.

Bazentin Circus. Scene 1

A heap of shovels on a wind & rain swept hill top, amid a waste of mud. Three mud be-spattered grimy, dirty hairy hungry & very much frozen soldiers, with gear enough for thirty in a like condition to the aforesaid soldiers (barring the hairy & hungry & emphasising the muddy) trying to find a little warmth & shelter in the lee of the abovementioned heap of shovels. Lots of soldiers in a similar plight & condition strew the scenery. Enter cook etc. Much activity a long wait for appearance of tea & stew, hot & good which doesn't last long. Exit stew. Enter God of Sleep with difficulty & with several forcible ejections by the God of Cold. Programme for night & half an hour doze followed by half an hour violent foot exertion to generate a little warmth. So the long dream night passes & dawn appears with no change in the landscape. Breakfast & then sick parade, employing the open air treatment; also a little cold water treatment. Work at finding a new posy for next night taken in hand & accomplished. Trip to transport through mud a foot deep on duty.

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Scene 2. Dugout formed by 5'x4' cavity dug in side of bank with overhead cover of waterproof sheets. Same weather landscape & soldiers. Conditions unchanged. Soldiers no longer tired & hungry but still frozen, muddy dirty & hairy. Gear is all outside. Passed a better night, although we were very cramped. The doctor's batman joined us as we are very short handed, making a fourth. There was just room enough for the 4 of us to jam ourselves in edgeways & lying on our sides & we had to stay like that all night not being able to move. The crawlies added considerably to our discomfort too as we couldn't get at them. It was funny how we all got into bed. Eric crawled in first & laid the groundsheets & his blanket & took off his boots & stowed them away. Then I crawled in, took off my boots & laid beside Eric then we laid my blanket on top & then our greatcoats & we were set. Then the other two followed suit & there we were in bed. The operation too at least half an hour. We reversed the process to get out in the morning.

I saw the Doc about my leg this morning. It is very sore. He told me that I had burst a small blood vessel & that there was a clot of blood in my leg & that although it wouldn't get worse, it would take about 3 weeks to get better, so I have something to look forward to. The conditions of work are quite hard enough as it is, but with a sore leg it will not be nice. However I will have to carry on & make the best of it. My ankle is still weak too.

The march here from Fricourt was about 5 miles & to me a nightmare. The last part at any rate as my leg had given out. I thought we would never get here. The mud was the worst I have seen yet & that is saying a lot. Waggon, horse & men are continually getting bogged & they say that men have been drowned in the shell holes & horses have had to be shot it is so bad. That is up the line, it is not quite so bad here, but quite bad enough. We are about 7 miles from the line here & when we go in it is for 48 hrs only & then 48 hrs out here again. We have heaps of gear to carry & they say it takes 4 hours to get there. There are no dugouts to speak of & the wounded get an awful time getting out. I don't see how they are going to carry on in winter.

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There is no accommodation for the immense concentration of men here. The general thinks the first dry spell we have there is going to be a big advance – the biggest yet attempted. We have dozens of planes up & balloons galore just here, so that Fritz won't get a glimpse of how things are going. Poor old Fritz is pushed right off the earth just here as far as aerial observation goes. This just as well too. All last night there was a heavy bombardment. Fritz hardly replied at all. The firing slackens by day. The guns big & little abound round here. When the bombardment starts, there won't be much noise! Oh no!

There are 60,000 horses water round here twice a day. The ground is very broken here as well as muddy. It is a lovely place.

We have just finished another open air sick parade. They are rotten. I wonder if we are moving up tonight. I think they will wait a long time for the next spell of fine weather.

Friday 27th Oct. Colder & wetter & windier than ever. Our little dugout is very snug compared to outside. The Doc. is up the line having a look round. Letter from Grandma 28th Aug.

Saturday 28th. Finer today but still showery & windy. Getting used to cold. Not moving for couple of days yet they say.

Saw the Doc & showed him my leg. It is very painful & he says it is a haematoma or something like that. Anyway it is just as bad as the name sounds. It is a rupture of the muscles with internal bleeding. Doc says it won't get worse but will take some time to heal. Something for me to look forward to. Especially the march up to the line & back but I will carry on if possible. Lot of mail in. I wonder if there is any for us. It is about time as we haven't had any for over 3 weeks now. Heavy bombardment again early this morning. Firing going all the time but worst at night.

Saturday 28th. Had letters from home dated Aug 27th very glad to get them. Wrote to Gma & Gpa.

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Sunday 29th Oct. This morning we pulled the roof off our home and packed up. We left at noon & started out through the mud & slush for the support positions which we were to occupy. We only went about 4 miles but it took us 4 hours to do it. I had a bad time but not as bad as I had expected. Just as well too! When we got here at last, we started in to build our dugout. Eric & Bob had gone with the gear and the cooker. While Eric went looking for the kerosene which had gone astray I helped Bob over with the gear & we started in on the dugout. It took us well into the night to finish it & then after a bit of tea we turned in. Eric found the kerosene & I went scouting for water & other dugout necessities such as brazier & covering for the roof etc. The dugout is about 10 ft square with a wire netting roof covered with bags & rags, sticks & then earth. It is pretty big but also wet & airy but will do alright as a shelter. Our gear is inside too. The thing I noticed on the way up was the predominance [sic] of guns, hundreds & hundreds, big, little every 25 yds & thousand & thousands of shells big & little & millions of men & lots of mud. We are situated here in a natural depression like a big Jack Johnson* hole & the dugout is built on the side. The rest of H.Q.R.'s details occupy the hole. There are dozens of big guns all round it. We are in Trones Wood & passed through Longueval on the way. We were near Mametz Wood in the last place & Delville Wood is just near us.

Monday 30th Oct. We fixed the dugout a bit this morning & started a fire in the brazier. We are all busy writing as the mail closes tomorrow. The Doc is with B coy about 3 miles away. I suppose we will have to join him tomorrow. The view here is one of several woods with all the trees stripped & shattered. All the ground is churned up with shell holes. Trenches (old ones) run everywhere. Mud is everywhere, old dugouts & gun positions blown in and a big Hun 9.2 howitzer overturned & half buried nearby with its store of big yellow shells scattered all roads some smashed. Nearby is an old grenade store with hundreds of hand & rifle grenades strewn about & old clothes & equipment as well. There are 3 dead Fritz's still unburied in the wood.

*Jack Johnson. German shell bursting with black smoke. After the boxer *Jack (John Arthur) Johnson* (1878-1946), the first black American world heavyweight champion (1908-1915). [Battlefield colloquialisms http://www.ict.griffith.edu.au/~davidt/z_ww1_slang/index_bak.htm]

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Everywhere now are men & horses & improvised dugouts. B coy is at Flers. Tucker is short. Even biscuits are so much sought after. I discovered a tin of jam in the mud unopened! Melon & honey it was too! What a find! There are some more letters for us somewhere.

We have had about 12 hrs dry weather so far all the rest of the time it has rained. It is doing so now & I don't think this old dugout will keep it out for long. It is coming in at the corners now. Bob & the Doctor's batman have left to join the Doc at B coy so there are only 3 of us here now which is better. We have the brazier inside. It is a bit smoky but warm. The door of the dugout is not large & it is a pity we couldn't take moving pictures of all the contortions one goes through getting in & out without walking all over everybody & everything. I am particularly funny with my gammy leg. Everybody is taking to scarves & balaclava caps. They look like a lot of Bairns father's pictures. I can see us getting swamped out of here. The rain is coming in on all sides bringing dirt & mud with it. The brazier has nearly gone out & we can't get it to go again. Rain is pelting down & coming in faster. We have one consolation, it can't last forever.

It has been dark some time. We have been reading letters from home dated Sept 9th & 10th. We are now going to bed. The dugout is swamped & we (& everything) is soaked through & covered with mud. The redeeming feature is the brazier which has been induced to go again. We have laid one waterproof & a blanket & are going to sit on them side by side with the other blanket & waterproof over us. So we will spend the night & sleep if it be our good fortune. God night everyone!!!

Tuesday 31st Oct. We passed a wretched night. Sat amongst the general mud & desolation until midnight but it was no good. I went outside to get a bit of a rest & presently Eric followed. We put in the night standing in the wind & rain round a big fire that was built earlier in the evening. It was about the worst night I have had so far. Towards morning it cleared a bit & today has been

reasonably fine. We took advantage of this to build another dugout which we did. It is the same size & style as the one we had at Bazentin Circus. We collected leaves for the floor & then shifted all our gear down.

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When we view all our gear strewn all about it seems a marvel that three men could ever lift it all, let alone carry it for miles through mud varying in depth from ankle to knee deep & over head deep in the shell holes. These latter are death traps. Several men have been drowned in them & several horses.

We passed a fairly comfortable night. We were warm & dry at any rate but very cramped. My sore leg gets a bad time & is very much in the way. We didn't wake up till 8 o'clock this morning Wed Nov 1st and all the others had brekker and were packed up ready to leave & left soon after. We had breakfast alone & in state, pulled the roof off our little home which caused some pangs after all the work we put in on it, pack up all our stuff which took some time & set off like three pack camels for Hery Hd Qrs from where we are leaving for Flers with the coy.

It is dull again today and a bit rainy. We left here at about 3 oclock & arrived at our destination German dugout in Grass Lane. We went via Flers & it is about 4 miles. The going was very difficult & our load was very heavy & we were just about dead by the time we got there. The Doc wanted me to go back to the transport to look after the water cart but I persuaded him to let me stop. We had 3 casualties during the night.

Thursday Nov 2nd I was on duty from 4-8 am. We had 2 cases & after brekker I went down to Hd Qrs (about 1 mile) for our rations & water. On the way I passed a "tank" knocked out. Inside are the charred remains of two men. They are huge things but not much good now. They were a success at first though.

It has been raining again & everything is muddy as usual. We are about 400 yds from the line here & if there is a "hop over" we will move up. It is a good possy here. The Doc & Eric are now up

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the line looking for a new possy to take up after the advance if there is one which is not likely unless the weather clears a bit. It would be sheer murder to send the men over with the ground as it is. The trenches are thigh deep in mud.

This dugout consists of a bit of a sap with several turns about 5 ft wide & about 40 yds long in all with 2 entrances. It is about 6 ft high with some 6 ft overhead.

Friday Nov 3rd We had about half a dozen casualties last night. I did from 4-8 am.

I am now sitting in entrance to A coys Hd Qrs up the line. The Doc & I are doing the rounds at sick parade.

We are all busy filling sand bags to build a shrapnel proof shelter just outside the dugout entrance for slightly wounded in the case of a rush. It is a big job for only 4 men & besides that we have all our proper work to do. Luckily there are not many casualties. We have had 14 wounded & 4 sick through so far.

Our Colonel was among the wounded today. A sniper got him through the cheek & he is in a bad way. He was a first class man too. I wonder what sort of Colonel we will get next.

We had a bit of shelling this afternoon. We are in easy view of Fritz lines & it is a marvel we are not sniped. We are not in a good position. Fritz knows this dugout is here as he built it himself. He has a big white mound on top as a mark & he can easily see us working about. I think he must be pretty short of ammunition like we were on the beginning of the war. The ground round here is very chalky & limey.

The weather is clearing up a bit.

Saturday 4th. The colonel died. It is a great pity as he was a fine man. There is a bit of a stunt coming off tonight.

Our preliminary bombardment was pretty intense. When our boys hopped over they were to capture a Hun strong post forming a semicircle, by forming a new line along the diam. parallel to the old trench. Our battn & the 1st were to take half the line each. Our fellows got their half & more easily but the 1st met with strong opposition & failed to link up. Fritz must have been waiting

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him as five minutes after the 1st Bn bombers went out half of them were back again wounded. It was a great disappointment & of course our fellows had to retire or be cut off. Soon after the hop over the wounded started coming in. First the light cases & later on the serious cases. In the middle of the operations with our dugout full of wounded & the shelter we built up on top & all around was crowded too we had a misfortune. One bright specimen who had volunteered to help us started in to make tea for the wounded. He seized the nearest water tin (which contained kerosene) & put a dixieful on the Primus to boil. Not content with that he would show us his patent way of getting kerosene out of the water so he lit a match & applied it to what he thought was water. Of course it started blazing at once. Eric seeing as he thought the Primus on fire, thought the quickest way of putting it out was to get rid of the water first & knocked it flying. Then the band started. A sheet of flame shot out & everywhere things started blazing. We at once bundled the wounded out & directed them all on to the next Dressing Stn about ¾ mile further on & then put out the fire by passing basins & steel helmets full of water from a shell hole by a series of men down onto the fire which fortunately was put out without much trouble. All my equipment was burnt, my overcoat muffler a belt, a pair of sox & several other things but luckily nothing very valuable. The others came off likewise so not much damage was done. Anyway, it was a record clearance of the Aid Post. We then tidied up & waited for the stretcher cases. These generally arrive slowly so a couple of men could carry on at the Station. So I went off with some Field Amb bearers (1st Field it was too) up to the trenches to bring them in. Our party made off for a dugout in No Man's land where there were several cases. We were not sure of our way & it was ticklish work. The conditions were awful. It had just been raining & the mud was thick everywhere. Each one of us got covered from head to feet & must have been a pretty sight. It was now early Sunday morning Nov 5th. We were always getting bogged in sticky mud up to our knees. I was carrying the stretcher which was always in the way. It was pitch dark & the shell holes were everywhere. There is just about room enough between them to pick a way. We got lost a couple of times & after a long & trying journey we reached the dougout (we had to cross trench after trench including the front line trench & running in all directions. It is very bewildering & one easily loses the way & might walk

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right into Fritz lines.) When we arrived here we were not long in getting a case. We knew it would be a tough job getting back so we took 6 bearers. I will never forget that carry. We went straight up over the top cut across the firing trench got lost & wandered about all roads (they all do this) were redirected & eventually got home. We carried the stretcher like a coffin on our shoulders, 6 of us. It was the only way. The poor wounded get a very rough trip getting out in spite of all we can do. We were always getting bogged in the mud & tripping over barbed wire & falling into shell holes etc. etc. but we didn't drop him once. When we rested we plomped him down in the mud & everything was covered with it. Coming across we all stop still when the flares go up but coming back there is none of that we have to keep going on & take our chance of Fritz seeing us. All this time the usual casual bombardment was on & several times we were uncomfortably close to the "iron rations". It is marvellous sometimes the escapes one has. Once there were about 5 of us bearers & about 10 bombers all in a little hole & a big shell burst right on top & only two were hit & those were only scratches. That is only an instance. When at last we got the case down after a bit of a rest we took another case down to the ambulance. By this time we had a host of bearers working & they got them all down barring a few who had to be left till the next night. One ambulance squad tried to get one of them using the white flag but were sniped. One being killed & one wounded. Just about 9:30

in the morning a stunt started on our left. The bombardment was terrific & general & our 55th Battn went over the top in real fine style those who saw it say & did good work. After cleaning & tidying up the Aid Post & ourselves ready to carry on again we turned in for a bit of a rest after a bit of a feed. We all needed it too.

Tonight (Sunday) just as it was getting dark some bearers came up to get the wounded in from the dugout where they had been left that day. They didn't know the way so I had to take them. It was a bit of responsibility as I wasn't sure of the way either & I didn't want to lead them into danger. We started off me leading, ploughing through the mud & slush & dodging the wire & holes etc & we got safely as far as some distance along on sunken road from which we were to strike off, following a communication trench along the top to the firing line & from thence to the dugout (some old gun positions they were) which lay about 100 yds in front of our machine gunners & about 30 – 40 yds from Fritz. Well, in this sunken road a R.S.B. took us to where he said he knew we were going & took us astray then left us. There we were nobody knew where & stranded so I left the bearers in a trench & went enquiring the way. Luckily we found the machine gunners & I nicked ahead to see if I could locate the dugout which I did & then dived back & brought the bearers across. They got all the wounded safely in.

On the way there we would tear ahead & then when a flare went up down we would go & lie still as mice like the fellows in Bairnsfather's picture. That evening star shell flew up & off again. If it hadn't been for the men in the trenches we would have walked over to Fritz more than once. I had to report back straight away & so I & another fellow started off home striking out for the front line but owing to taking a slightly different angle we struck a new trench they were just digging & I thinking it was the old trench started following the communication trench down, but were stopped by one of the men who told us that we were walking right into Fritz's arms so under his direction we "about-turned" & got home safely after a bit of wandering about in No Man's Land. It was exciting while it lasted, as there was considerable shelling going on & one never knew what was going to happen next in my wanderings. I wore a lovely blister on my heel. I suppose my feet are soft after rubbing all that grease into them to stop frost bite & trench feet & my boots were a bit roomy & every time you pulled your foot out of the mud the boot worked up & down on the heel. I was nearly lame when I got home & so instead of guiding the next party up I gave them the best directions I could & sent them off. They found it alright & I am glad at that. It was a ticklish place to find & ticklish work getting there & back. I am glad now that I persuaded the Doctor to keep me here as those are the first jaunts I have had in No Man's & I wouldn't have missed the experience for a lot. I suppose now we will be going out soon only there is a rumour of another stunt first. They are waiting for the fine weather which doesn't seem to be coming at all.

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Monday Nov 6th

Just now it is about 3 am & I am on duty in the Dressing Station. Everything is fairly quiet. I suppose we have had about 60 cases through here so far. There were a lot last night.

I don't know how I will get all the mud off my things when I get out. I will want clean things too as the ones I have are crawly. You can't help it but simply have to grin & bear it. It is simply rotten though to feel them crawling over you. I haven't had a wash since coming here but I managed to get a razor to have a shave and it was very unpleasant coming off.

My leg is still sore but much better & "useable" than it was which is a very good thing.

Last night Eric went down to the Transport with a sample bottle of our drinking water for testing. I suppose when he comes back today he will have something nice to eat from the canteen over there. That will be alright!

Tuesday 7th We left this afternoon & came here to Flers. Harry Bob & I came first leaving Eric the Doc & his batman to follow. We had a real good home in our mind, but were shunted out of that to make a place for the Doc & the Padre.

Friday Nov 10th This is the 4th day we have been here. We have a posy in a cellar underneath a ruined house. The village is all in ruins but there is still a lot left. It is not like Pozieres. We get shelled considerably but down here we are OK unless they send over something unusual like a 16 in or an armour piercing shell. The weather is a bit finer but the ground is nearly as bad. In one way it is much worse. Stickiness. It is much easier to get bogged! Every day we hold sick parade at A&C Coy one day & B&D Coy the next & take turns to go there. Otherwise we are having an easy time. B&D Coy are at Trones Wood a long way off & A&C are near Delville Wood not so far.

We have mattresses to sleep on here & we put in a stove but all the same we are not comfortable. The beds are too soft & the air seems too muggy with the fire. I will be glad to get out into the open and hard beds again although we are glad to be out of the wet – we don't want to get any more of that, only I suppose we will have to.

Fritz seems to be getting his punch back. His planes & balloons are getting fairly numerous & active & even daring. I think it is about time he was taught another lesson.

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Saturday 11th Nov. Wrote home. At 5 pm I was informed that with Eric I was to report to Transport that night for water duties. The pack horses left at dusk & we were to get a ride down. We packed up in a hurry & had a bit of tea & left. The pack saddles are very wide & uncomfortable. My legs were aching by the time we had got half way but I hung on. My sore leg was trouble too. It was dark & misty & the road was awful. It was covered with shell holes & lumps & bumps of all sorts & in parts up to the horses bellies in mud. We were one of a long line of pack mules going out & we passed of mules coming in ambulance wagons huge motor lorries Transport wagons & limbers etc. We passed a couple of tanks on the way down & lots of Caterpillar tractors for heavy guns which were all around us. I noticed some dead horses by the way too probably being bogged and then killed by shells which often happens. We arrived here at last & turned into a bit of a dugout which happened to be empty. We were very lucky actually as there were some camp blankets in it.

Sunday 12th Nov. We have had a very quiet day today. We are only here for form. All red tape. We have nothing to do. We fixed up the dugout a bit & went looking for a shell hole to bath in but were unsuccessful so had to remain dirty. We managed to secure a couple of clean shirts however which were very welcome.

Today two parcels arrived from home along with 2 letters. The parcels were the ones that we had been told about some time back & were for Christmas. They came quickly but we didn't mind as we were just in a nice state of emptiness for a parcel. My! Weren't they top notchers. We have been eating lollies all day but haven't broken into the tinned stuff yet.

Monday 13th Water carts went away to join battn but we are staying to help the Transport up tomorrow. We are leaving at 8:30.

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Tuesday 14th Rose 5:30 had breakfast. Packed up & helped Transport men a bit. Eric left about 8 am riding the Doc's pony & leading another. I was to follow the Maltese cart. Left a bit late owing to difficulty in packing 2 extra wagon loads on the remaining wagons. Two poles of wagons broke the night before. Let off at last one got bogged early. I stopped behind to help it out & the others left me behind. I thought I would cut across train line through the trucks onto the road & wait for them there. Did so – waited ½ hour & no transport. Went back along road & still no transport. Finish transport nahpoo! (afterwards learn they went another way). Sat down on side of road to wait the Battn which was coming out that day. Waited 2 hrs. No Battn. Finish Battn. Nah poo. I had a good idea where they were so set off. It was about 6 miles and I arrived there in about 4 hrs of hard going dead tired & foot sore etc etc. (had had no dinner or tea). Found out that they had gone. Very sad. Reported to Traffic Control who gave me a note & told me to report to 1st Divn Stragglers Post. Walked for about another 3 miles but couldn't find anywhere to report to. Just about dead beat & beginning to get sick of it. At last I found the Camp Commandant of the Montauban area. Reported.

Told to get some tucker at cookhouse & turn in for night which I did. Very cold. No blanket & only ½ an overcoat other half burned in fire up line. [10 am Wednesday 15th Nov written up side of page] Passed night somehow, reported to Commandant & got note. Begged a bit of bread & cheese for brekker & set off. I was told to go to Fricourt & ask my way there. Struck a 1A motor lorry. Hopped aboard & rode right through Fricourt to the Amm Park. Got down & found Bn had left there only 2 hrs previously. Had about 4-5 miles to walk through Dernacourt [sic Dernancourt] to here, a fair sized village

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called Buire (sous-corbu) & reported. All well & carry on. Billeted in a big fairly new barn, very cold! Parcel from Amesbury & letters from home arrived this morning.

Thursday 16th Nov. Very cold & frosty. Nothing doing. Transport moved this morning.

Friday 17th Packed up & left about 10 am. Marched about a mile & got into buses again & had a good ride down to a village called Flesselles a fair size & not far from Amiens. Very cold again sharp frost. 2" ice on water all day. Issued with gloves. No clothes. Very dirty & in need of clothes. Had a bath in afternoon – very freezy.

Saturday 18th This morning we woke up & took a glimpse outside & about an inch or so of snow – all covering everything. It was pretty & cold. It stopped there all day but disappeared the next day when it rained. We are all writing Christmas cards now, which are procurable in great quantities here. We are sending about 2 doz each.

A box of clothes arrived for us from the AMC Comforts fund & we are now set up well.

We are billeted in a small barn where there are some wire bunks made. We have plenty of straw from "Madame of the house" & are pretty warm.

Sunday 19th Nov. Not so cold today but dull. Nothing doing much. Writing letters all the rage. We are sending home some pretty handkerchief sachets home which we bought near by.

Sick parade from 6-9 is about all the work we do now. They say we are here for 10 days.

Friday 24th Been here just 1 week. Pretty cold. Nothing much doing. Bob went on leave to Amiens this morning.

I have had a very bad cold & troublesome cough & sore throat for several days but it is getting better now thank goodness. Only my leg is getting bad again. I hope it changes its mind too & gets better soon. We won't be here long now before we move up for another splash.

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Sat 25th Nov. Packed up early this morning & left at 7:30. Marched about 1 mile to some English lorries & packed in, 25 each very tightly packed & were taken back again through Amiens to Buire.

Billeted in tents but ours was leaky & "no bon" generally so we buzzed around & found ourselves a fine shed to live in. We are nice & comfy here now in spite of the rain. They say we are here for some time, the Battn is doing fatigues instead of going into the line. It is raining continuously.

Sunday 26th Had sick parade & then a Communion service here.

This afternoon we had the HQ Officer's cook installed in our home. It is very annoying. Our home is not our own now as besides the cook is all HQs batmen & other hangers on.

We had a nice little place here & now it is spoilt. There was one compartment for a living room & another for sick parade. Now the place doesn't belong to us at all.

Monday 27th This morning Eric departed to go to Fricourt & take up his abode there as two of the companies are up there & it is too far to go from there every time. He will be lonely all by himself. They are building another cookhouse for the cook outside so we may lose them soon. I hope so anyway.

We had a fire in the town today. A couple of billets were burnt just down the street & are still smoking.

We can hear big bombardments occasionally & sometimes we see a plane or two but otherwise we are far from the "madding crowd".

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Monday Dec 4th We have had an uneventful week. Fairly large sick parades & plenty of work. Bob went on leave to Blighty. We should not be long now for our leave. We are pretty comfy here. We take a walk up to the coal dump every day & get some coal & so we can have a good fire coning constantly. Men are in pretty bad condition.

Today I set off to relieve Eric at Fricourt. Rode in empty limber to our transport just near Albert & took the ration limber from there arriving there about 3 pm & took over from Eric. I am camped in an old cellar along with the two CSM's. Later on the orderly Sergeant came here too. We have a fire going mostly but can only keep it downstairs when the wind is blowing the right way for the smoke to go up the chimney. It has been very cold & wet lately & miserable. Coal is my only hope of a fire. I "feed" with the officer's batmen & have not any worry about rations.

The first night I burnt my hand with petrol thinking it was kerosene & lighting the fire with it. It was very painful but the thumb alone was bad.

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Monday Dec 11th Here I still am. Have been here just a week. Very busy week too! I have dressings, inhalations etc. at 10 am, 4 pm & 7 pm. Sick parade (where I act as doctor & fix up all common cases reserving the bad cases for the Doc's visit) at 12. Subsidiary sick parade with the Doc at 3 pm. Meals 8:30, 1:30 & 6:30. Generally going strong all day from 8:30 – about 7 pm. Doc comes up each afternoon, holds sick parade, give me news & letters if any & stores & then goes back. Except for that I am the Doctor & I get on very well considering. My thumb is bad & was a bit septic. It even had symptoms of poisoning one time but I soon scotched that with hot water & fomented, but it is still very touchy & a terrible nuisance in my work.

Fat Lambert is just over the road with his lorry. He is on carting stone for the road & works at night. Each night I go over for tea & a chat & the last couple of nights went for a couple of trips with him & got home about 1:30 am. We talk about old Tec' times & all sorts of things. He is a very decent chap. The last two days our

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Doc has not come up but the 1st Bn Doc holds sick parade instead. He lives close by. I got a lot of stores from his AMC this afternoon.

Men live here in huts, 40 to a hut. Very crowded but dry. Lot of sickness however, few influenza. Temps up to 105°. Very wet & muddy & cold.

Tuesday Dec 12th This morning it snowed again. It was real pretty but the rain came after & thawed it. It is very muddy everywhere.

We ought to be going on leave very shortly now. Have cabled home for £10 each.

Sunday Dec 17th Have been back here at Bn Hd Qrs for 4 days now. Doc ordered me to return as leave was imminent. One of the SB's is carrying on there, with a little tuition from me given before I left. Visited Hugh before I left & got the overcoat & several letters to post. Arranged for a loan. Came down here Wed afternoon. Got two lifts on motor waggons. Found them shifted out of our proper place into where the cookhouse was. Little place & very cramped. Plenty of work. Leave put off till Bob or Ian return which will not be for some days yet. Got Jean's Christmas cake.

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My! It is "some" cake. We also got letters & wrote some.

Dec 25th 1916. Christmas day & here we are – no not in Blighty - but in the trenches. "Oh great was the fall thereof my countrymen!" Bob came back the morning we moved out of our billet in Buire for the trenches, on the 20th inst. Leave was cancelled temporarily [sic] & now that it has started again we are in the trenches & cannot be spared. Bob is up the line with 4 Coy & Eric is in Flers chlorinating water. I relieve him tonight.

We left Buire about 8 am & Eric & I, after packing the Maltese Cart, we marched with it to La Belle Vue Farm where we dumped the panniers & a few unnecessary items off the cart & then proceeded to Melbourne Camp near Fricourt & Mametz. We spent the night there in round tin sheds which are now springing up everywhere like mushrooms. They are round like Kaffirs kraals some commonly called Kaffir Camp. They are lined inside with wood & are fairly warm. Built to hold 30, they generally have 40 or so crammed into them. We held sick parade a record number & were just in time to get a little breakfast when we moved off again about 11 am when we marched about 4 miles to Bernafay Wood where we spent the night in more huts like the others. Here we packed up the gear for the trenches from the cart, about 12 sandbags full & next morning after sick parade we set out laden like camels for the trenches. The weather was very rainy and the mud was worse if possible

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than even last time. It was awful & we were moving mountains of mud by the time we arrived at our destination which was the same one as we had last time in Grass Lane. We found it this time well stocked with dressings food drinks for wounded etc, stove & really we needn't have brought anything with us at all. It appears casualties are few this time but trench feet abound, which is worse than actual wounds if you get a good attack. The trenches are worse than ever. Unless we have a stunt we oughtn't to have a bad time. There just enough work about the place to keep us busy. We take shifts on duty at night as last time. We have one temporary man attached to us to replace Ian Maydwell who is in hospital. There are only two of us to do the shifts so we get pretty long hours. The total number inhabiting this dugout & a little one next door however is about 12, including Doc & the padre with their batmen & d or 4 slightly sick who are in hospital here. We have been running a hospital now for some time. New orders say that slightly sick etc up to 15 in number can be kept at Battn aid post. We have to feed them on cornflour & bovril & take their temps & administer medicine etc looking after them generally.

Fritz shells about the same round here as he did last time.

Our Christmas dinner will be a bit different from what was expecting a week ago. We have made a bit of blanc mange from corn flour as sweet. We may get some fresh meat & Christmas billies if the ration carriers bring them up. They have not arrived so far. We will make the best of it & enjoy our Christmas dinner in the trenches.

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Dec 26th Christmas is over and it was the worst Christmas I ever spent. It was impossible to be merry for besides the ordinary trench conditions I was afflicted with awful pains in the stomach & diarrhoea bad. After all the cooking & preparations I had done, I couldn't eat a thing all day. Took oil & feel better today. Yesterday was very wet & cold & blowy & in the afternoon I had to go up to Flers to relieve Eric who was on the job of chlorinating water. Just before I went, we all had a Christmas Communion Service with the Padre in the little dugout & all the while outside the guns were thundering their Christmas greetings to Fritz. There was no lull in the bombarding rather the reverse all day. I suppose it was for a reply to the German peace offers. Few casualties this time. Mostly sick men & trench feet.

Well after the Service I packed up & set off for Flers to find Eric. I was feeling very groggy & it was tres froid & very windy. I walked to Flers about 1 ½ miles looked in all the old haunts & round the well but couldn't find him. Cooks didn't know either so I had to tramp back to Bn Hd Qrs to find out where he was, about another mile. They told me & I came back & found his dugout. He was out so I lay down & rested very knocked out. Bye & bye he came back & told me all about the job & how he got the dugout etc etc & then he packed up & left. I got into bed & slept. Felt much better next morning. Dugout just big enough for one with the gear. Very bien. Built of sandbags with wooden roof & 3 sheets of tin (purloined by

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Eric) to keep the rain out. 3 lengths of duck board side by side form the floor. It is a bit cold but dry & fairly cosy.

Got up about 10 am & visited well & cooks (got a Tommy Cooker from these & a tin of bully & an onion). Got a tin of water from well, came home, made up Solution by adding 2 measures of chloride of lime also made a 1/3 pint measure. Stuck up a big notice outside for 3rd Bn fellows to chlorinate their water here & then had dinner. Tin of pork & beans (cold) & a little coffee & bread. Can't eat much yet.

After dinner collected some dugout utensils e.g. couple of old bayonets & piece of board for a shelf, boot scraper, water tin & scrap tin drinking water fire tin & wood. (Eric had these last 3 already).

Went down to Bn HdQrs down the road about 3/4 mile & posted a friend's letter he had given me to post in England when I went on leave. Our leave is postponed so it was urgent I posted it. Got a tin of beans & a tin of bully from the cooks & came home. Good job here nothing much to do.

My bed consists of water proof sheet on duck boards. One blanket under me & 2 over me. Eric "won" the extra blanket or there would only be two. I am glad as it is cold enough with three.

Eric left me bread & jam & coffee, candles & matches, when he went so along with the other things I am set up. I feel much merrier today than I did yesterday. I wish I were in Blighty all the same, I guess I would be merrier still there. Wet feet & mud "partout", cold & shells don't tend to make you happy. There are guns all round here hundreds of them & they make my head ache with their everlasting infernal racket. When they are all going it is like Bedlam let loose. Fritz's planes are getting cocky! There have been several fights.

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I haven't seen a paper for days! I wonder how the war is going. I don't think it will finish for some time yet. There is nothing much doing here now. Just incessant bombardments. The mud & cold are the worst things.

My leg which the Doctor gave 3 weeks to get better is still sore & it is 2 months since it happened. There is a big hard lump there now & I suppose it will take another couple of months to go down. It was a nasty bump I got. My ankle is alright again now. I had a pair of Tommy boots which nearly crippled me & would certainly have done so only I found an old boot which fitted & threw the bad one away. They are very badly shaped & made boots are causing a lot of trouble. I will buy a good pair of Australian boots when I get to England.

Wednesday Dec 27th 1916. The dugout is in the right bank of the sunken road leading from Bn Hd Qrs to Flers. Since I have been here Fritz has shelled almost continuously day & night. There are a lot of guns around here.

It is a beautiful day today. Frosty but clear & sunshiny. It is a pity they wouldn't stop the war so we can enjoy it. The men are getting an awful time this time. Trench feet are common & it is a very painful & dangerous complaint. The men can't stand much more & it is pitiable to see them going into the line already unfit. An order that all light cases were to be kept in the line & treated there has added a lot to our work & the poor men's discomfort. Amen that ought to be treated here are now not treated & men that should be sent away are kept here crammed in a little dugout not half big enough. There are some bad cases of trench feet.

This afternoon Eric came & relieved me also bringing the good news that leave was for us & we were to report at Bn Hd Qrs tomorrow morning. I got very wet & muddy

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again getting back to the Aid post as the way was bad & it was dark. I worked up to midnight & then turned in. I am disgusted with the Doc. He is so hard hearted & unsympathetic with the men. Blaming them for getting trench feet.

Thursday 28th Dec. Rose at 7 am. I had a little brekker, worked till 11 am & then set off. Found Eric reported to Hd Qrs. Pass not ready. Very cold. Heavy frost night before. Waited about 2 hours & then made up to little dugout in Flers for dinner. Boiled some water in Eric's Dixie in a little dugout

out of the wind over some candle grease paper & biscuits fire & made some soup (?) from a packet we got out of Auntie Nell's parcel which arrived a day or two ago. Bread (& dirt mud etc) & soup (?) is as our dinner! We got them warm however.

Reported at Hd Qrs again & got our passes. Set off along duck boards past Bgde Hd Qrs through Delville Wood onto Montaubon where they told us the transport was. Couldn't find it, so set off for Bellevue Farm (just outside Albert) walking & riding in limbers, alternately.

We arrived there about 7:30 pm tired & hungry where we got a bit of a feed some blankets & a shake down with some of the bandsmen in their dugout. We slept warm & well & long! Next day Fri 29th we got our packs (I got mine, Eric couldn't find his amongst the others & so had to leave it) had a shave went to Ordinance Stores got clean clothes inside & out went up to Tommy baths had a hot bath, put on our clean things & returned old ones to Ordinance. What a transformation scene! Two brand new spick & span soldiers in the place of two hairy dirty crawly muddy lumps of humanity clothed in sundry dirty & muddy rags called clothes. It was then about 4 pm.

We then had some tea & cakes at a canteen & went to the pictures. Bought some provisions for the train journey went up to station & reported to R.T.O about 8 pm. Put in very weary & cold wait of 6 hrs for train. Got aboard & left Albert at 2 am on Saturday 30th. Train journey very weary & slow & seats very hard. Destination Le Havre via Amiens & Rouen. Time 24 hrs should have been 10. Side tracked & shunted & left continually.

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About tea time we arrived a small station with a canteen. Great Bun rush. We were among the first & so managed to secure some tea & a big bun for tea. About a 1000 men all try to get served at once at a little counter about 10 yds long. All canteens are the same round here. It is very funny.

Arrived Le Havre about 1:30. Marched about 3 miles to Detail Camp got blankets & some tea & dry bread. Turned in about 4 am.

Sunday 31st Got up about 10 am went for walk. Visited big YMCA hut & Field Bakery where we had a good feed of roast meat & peas & potatoes tipping the fellow 5 frs. Got back late & nearly too late to get our pass stamped for tonight's boat which leaves at midnight. We will arrive in Blighty on New Year's Morning. Won't we have a glorious time. To get back to civilisation after 18 months of soldier's life.

Got our pass stamped & fell in about 7 pm with the others & marched about 3 more miles to the boat. We had a lot of waiting about which was very tiring & then a final grand rush for the boat. It was only a small boat (about 3000 tons) & all of us couldn't get on so the unlucky remainder had to wait for the next boat which went next day. We were among the first on & stowed ourselves away below & forward. Boat packed & left about 11:30 pm. Dozed fitfully until morning when we arrived at Southampton about 6 am getting off boat at 8 am & catching train for London at 8:45 am on the 1st Jan 1917 (Monday). Train very comfortable & fast although only 3rd class carriages. Country lovely & green & nice houses about. Reached Waterloo Stn about 11:15 where we got out & took a taxi to Horseferry Rd where our Hd Qrs were when we reported & Eric was paid. Then we ducked across to the War Chest Club & booked beds for the night put our kit in lockers & had a feed. The Club is a real good concern where you can get the best of every attentions [sic] (meals, beds, baths, clean up etc etc) at very moderate charges. After stowing our kit we went to a barbers & had a shave, hair cut & shampoo then to a clothes store for a pair of trousers each (we only had Tommy slacks & no Australian would wear them in London).

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We walked around a bit & made a few purchases. I had a list about 1 mile long of things I had to get for other people & myself.

We had a band concert at the Club after tea & having had no proper sleep for 4 nights we turned in early & slept like tops! Soft beds & pillows & clean sheets!!!! Oh my, upon waking up I didn't know where I was & thought that all the previous day had been a dream but I soon woke up.

Tuesday Jan 2nd 1916 [sic] Rose about 8:30. Had a hot bath, breakfast & then set to work. I had to go to Golders Green to a Mrs Jennings to get the money Hugh Lambert lent me so we decided to go there in the morning & do all our shopping in the afternoon. We went to Victoria St & took a bus right out there. It was lovely on the top of the bus & the parts we went through were lovely & clean too. Horseferry Rd environments are of the semi slum order. We were really disappointed in it at first but after the bus ride we saw a bit of what the other parts were like & had a very agreeable surprise. It took about an hour in the bus & about ½ hr to find Mrs Jennings. She is a very nice lady & we stopped to dinner. She invited us to call again & we promised to do so. Issue boots starting to hurt so I determined to get a good pair of boots that wouldn't raise blisters give sore feet or let in water as the others did so I got a pair for 35/-. If they are up to expectations they will be worth every penny & more. We came back by bus to the Strand & saw some of the busiest parts & had a look at what London traffic was like. Then we started on our purchases. My how the money flew. It seemed to melt away. There seemed to be such a lot of things we wanted. I got £1 worth of books, mostly Engineering. Goodness knows how I will every [sic] carry them in France. I suppose I will have to dump them somewhere. We also had our photos taken, one together & one each separate ½ doz of each position. Total cost £1. Am also getting my watch fixed up. It was about 5 pm when our buying was finished & we made tracks for the Club & tea. Making tracks means asking the proverbial copper where to get the right bus or tube.

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We are going to the pictures tonight. I have just had tea & am getting this job done. London is a big place & we are enjoying ourselves. We are just beginning to realise what the front is & means now that we have got away from it for a while. The thing that struck me most at first was the great number of soldiers who have soft and often unnecessary jobs in London & seem to have nothing to do but swank round in lovely clothes. Fine big chaps too who are needed in the trenches. It is funny that these are the men who voted for conscription while the men in the trenches voted against it. It is enough to break your heart & it made me wild for a while. When you see all these fellows having the time of their life here you can't help picturing to yourself the lot of some of the poor fellows at the front. We had come straight from there & so saw the difference. To see now you wouldn't know us for the same men as we were 1 week ago. Then were & our clothes were absolutely filthy now we have a new rigout from head to foot & hot baths when we want them. You will see how "swanky" we are when you get the photos. Still we are nothing compared to these other chaps I spoke about. Eric has had two letters & a telegram from the Midgleys. Tomorrow we are going to visit two of our old pals Link Primmer & Bob Moore who are here in a hospital working. One was wounded & one sick. The day after we will visit the Midgleys & probably stop a day or so. After that we will go & see Mrs Jennings again. She was real kind & made us most welcome. It was the first home we had been in since leaving home, so you can imagine how we felt. The Tommies are very lucky to be able to get home on their leave! All the people & the shops & traffic are a little bewildering at first & make one very homesick! It is curious to see everywhere men's jobs being done by boys & women. Went to pictures.

Wed Jan 3rd Went out to Southall to the Hospital to see Link & Bob. Found Link was home sleeping as he was on night work. Had dinner there & went home with Bob for a while. Then he came back with us to Victoria & took us to Link's place where he stopped a while & then went

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as he had an appointment. Link's mother was there & made us very welcome. Link came home later & his two sisters whom he had told us about. They are a very nice family. Link was very surprised & please to see us. We had some music etc & then went home.

Thursday Jan 4th Rose 6:30 had hot bath & breakfast, shave etc & caught train at Liverpool Stn at 8:40 for Saffron Walden. Beautiful day & had nice ride out. Took about 2 hrs. Mrs Midgley at Stn to meet us. Bessie came later. Walked home about 10 minutes to their home. Very fine old house & Mrs Midgley is very nice lady indeed & made us quite at home. Garden very nice with all funny shaped little shrubs peacocks, owls giraffes, deer etc etc very nicely laid out. Went for two walks round town saw museum & old Castle. Town very pretty & quaint with old Cromwellian dwellings but very slow. Met Mr Midgley also very nice had dinner & afternoon tea. Nothing to do so caught 5:30 pm train back to London. Went to more pictures after tea. Got our £20 from Mrs Midgley. Friday Jan 5th Rose 8:30. Had breakfast & a shave, face massage etc. Did some shopping. Went out to St Stephens House on the Embankment to visit Irene Midgley at address Eric got from Mr Midgley. Not in so called back in ½ hr. She was in & proposed an afternoon off, so we set off together. She is also very nice. It must run in the family. Had a look at the Home Office, Westminster, St Pauls (from the outside) Hyde Park & Rotten Row where all the "nobs" go riding, Picadilly Circus, The Serpentine etc etc. Had morning tea & afterwards dinner at "Lyons". In afternoon we went to St George's Hall to see Devants Conjuring & magical performance, which was very good. After teas, paid another visit to Mrs Primmer's. Link not in, but Mrs Primmer & the girls were & had a nice time till 9:30 when we went to the Paladium with them. Came home with them & then went home ourselves about 1:30 am & had a job to get a bed but

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managed it at last.

Sat 6th Jan. Rose 9 am. Some more business in the morning. Got watch & glasses. Watch not much good. Had another walk in Hyde Park & had dinner at a swell Restaurant then made our way to Queen's Hall in Regent St where we went to a concert. It was very good & we enjoyed ourselves from 3 till about 6 pm. Mostly singing & orchestra pieces & a couple of pianoforte solos. Very good. Went home to tea then out again to pictures, got sick of them & came home to bed.

I feel as if I were only just awaking to the fact that I am here. Just beginning to get used to the nice food & soft beds & cleanliness & comfort & soon we will be going back again. At first I had no appetite & couldn't sleep & wasn't happy but that is gone now. The only thing that worries me is the thought of having to go back again so soon.

Sunday 7th Jan. After brekker set off for Golder's Green again. Arrived at about 10 am at Mrs Jennings. Went to church with her (Presbyterian Scotch) almost identical with our service. Very enjoyable. One of the hymns was what Father calls the "Boys Hymn" & "Heavenly Father, in thy mercy hear our anxious prayer" etc etc. This is the third time I have had this hymn at different services. This time, it was just about the same time as they would be singing it at home on Sunday evening. We had a fine address indeed by a visiting Army Chaplain. Went back to dinner, Mr Jennings (a munitions worker, one of the heads) was at home & welcomed us warmly. They have 3 boys & one little girl. Such a dear little thing she is too & she quite took to us as we did to her. She is about 5 or 6 years old & very pretty & nice. It is very good to get a little bit of home life after being away so long. After dinner we went for a walk on Hampstead Heath which is close by, arriving home about 6 pm when we had tea. About 7:30 pm we left, not before being made

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to come back again on Tuesday night. It is very nice all this & everybody is very kind but it makes one homesick & besides you can't help thinking of the boys out yonder where we will be again in a few days now.

Monday 8th Jan. We intended this morning visiting the Zoo, but started some business & purchases again & there was such a lot of running about that it was dinner time before we were finished & so it was too late for the Zoo. Then after dinner we went to collect our photos & while we waited for them we put in the time at an adjacent picture show. We got the photos about 5 pm. They were very good & were quite worth the money. We bought the negatives as well for 2/6 each. After getting the

photos we came back to the War Chest Club for tea & after tea took a bus up the street to Victoria Stn & from there a train to 5 Garden St, Mrs Pimmer's. Link was there but Bob Moore didn't come although we wired him. We had another very pleasant evening with music, games etc & said goodbye about 11 pm for the last time probably although we will try & pop in on them again just before we leave.

Tomorrow we will see the Zoo in morning & meet the Misses Midgley as prearranged in the afternoon & at night visit Mrs Jennings at Golders Green for the last time. Wednesday morning we will send souvenirs home & in

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the afternoon we report back at Waterloo Stn at 3 pm for France. Boo Hoo hoo!!

Wednesday Jan 10th 1917 Had a good time yesterday. Saw Capt Scotts South Polar Expedition on the pictures. It was magnificent. Arrived home about 12:30 am from Golders Green last night. This morning I went & bought a big tin box, some string & brown paper & am now packing the box to send through Cook's Agency. After dinner we will go & say goodbye to Mrs Primmer & then high ho for France. I hope they don't shunt us around going back as they did coming. We have had a glorious time & it is hard to go back but I suppose we will settle down soon after.

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A B[in shadow writing followed by some sums]

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[Marbled end papers]

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October 8th 1916 Today is the anniversary of the day we left Australia. 12 months since today abroad.

Last night Eric & I packed up & came here & took over from the 1st Battn AMC. Harry arrived later with the rest of the rest of the supplies. We were sorry to leave our last place it was very comfortable. There are no bunks here & the dugout is not very big or substantial. We are about ½ mile from the front line here, which is too far so we may shift up if we can find another dugout. It is too far for the Regimental Stretcher Bearers to carry. Things are pretty quiet in this part of the line. This morning I accompanied the Doctor round the various Companies of our Battn holding sick parades. There were few sick & all I had to do was take a few temps & administer some pills. But we had a good walk. There are

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four companies, each one in a different position & we went round the lot. I left right after brekker & didn't get back till some time after tea. We went right through support trenches communication trenches, front line trench & all. This part of the line is real good & pretty quiet. The firing line is not dug in trenches, but a built up breastwork of sandbags with a parapet & parados*. Saw an old Catapult for throwing bombs & several other interesting things. Had a look at Fritz's trenches about 40 yds away with a periscope, saw them firing rifle grenades, which Fritz replied to with a few whizz bangs. The trenches run through an old wood, which is now nothing but the bare tree trunks. The ground is all torn up & desolate. We had a good walk around & saw a lot too. This finishes diary for 12 months active service abroad.

*French communication trench https://www.google.com.au/?gws_rd=ssl#q=ww1+parados

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