



Edgar Selwyn HARRISON

Date of Birth	1882
Place of Birth	Sydney
School	University of Sydney (graduated 1906 M.B., Ch.M. in the Faculty of Medicine)
Religion	Church of England
Occupation	Medical practitioner
Address	Sydney, New South Wales
Marital Status	Married
Age at embarkation	34
Next of Kin	Wife, Mrs Elsie Francis Harrison, care of Colonial Rubber Co, 7 Barrack Street, Sydney, New South Wales
Enlistment Date	8 March 1916
Rank on Enlistment	Captain
Unit Name	Field Ambulance 9, Section A
AWM Embarkation Roll No.	26/52/1
Embarkation details	Unit embarked at Sydney per HMAT A8 'Argyllshire' on 11 May 1916
Rank(s) from Nominal Roll	Major
Unit(s) from Nominal Roll	Australian Army Medical Corps
Fate	Returned to Australia 24 January 1919
Date of Death	1946 - Sydney
Age at Death	64
Other details	Son of George and Sophia Harrison Married Elsie Besnard in Sydney in 1912 War Service: England, France

Transcript
of the
Diary (1916-17) of Selwyn Harrison.

In the period covered by this diary, Selwyn Harrison was a Captain in the 9th Field Ambulance, Third Division, Australian Imperial Force. The diary covers the period from November 17th, 1916 to December 3rd, 1917, during which time he was in England, France and Belgium.

Beginning of the diary.

1916

November 17th

Been at Lark Hill just over four months, arrived there Monday night July 10th. Trained at Camp 21 for two and a half months and then to Camp 3. The last month I was at Camp 19 with 23rd F.A.B. and the D.A.C. in charge of Brigade Hospital. Left today for Camp 3 as we are leaving next Thursday. Been very muddy and wet.

November 19th

Slight fall of snow. Busy making final arrangements and getting Sections complete. Final visit to Figcheldean.

November 20th

Heavy snow during the night, ground covered about 4 inches deep. Very pretty; plenty of snowballing and slides.

November 22nd

The last day in England. Everything ready to move off. Baggage sent by Chaplin & Co. to Allison. Had a cheery evening saying goodbye. Three hours sleep on floor.

November 23rd

Reveille at 2.30 to enable transport to get away in good time. Everything satisfactory and all on board train to Amesbury by 7am. Reached Southampton at 9am. Major Lind in charge of transport party embarked on "Bellerophon". Remainder of Ambulance marched to another wharf where the hospital ship "Asturias" was lying. Waited all day in cargo shed, very cold and depressing, and marched on to paddle-steamer "Mona's Queen" at 7pm. Left at 8pm in pitch darkness, with a gale blowing. Men very crowded, about 1500 on board. Fairly comfortable in Saloon, slept all the way. Had to slow down on account of high seas. Reached Havre just before 6am.

November 24th

Disembarked and gave men breakfast on wharf. Marched about four miles to Docks Rest Camp, past acres of munitions and war material. Raining steadily at the Camp, which was all canvas. Had a cold shower, lunch at Officers Mess, then Onley and I went up town by tram to see the sights, returning about 6pm. Too wet and dismal to be very enjoyable. The others spent the evening in town.

November 25th

Left camp at 8.15am and marched through pouring rain to Gare Maritime, a goods station. Our train consisted of 50 flat trucks for waggons, cattle trucks for horses and men, and one dilapidated second class carriage for us. Steamed out at 1.15pm, passing through Rest Camp, where we noticed our motor-bike was left behind. Country not very interesting, cold and rainy. Passed through Rouen about 7pm; Darnetal a little later where we tested our French on a Gendarme guarding the bridge. Reached Monterolier Buchy at 11pm where tea was ready for the men, and water for the horses. Major Honman, Hunter and I missed the train and had to wait in a bitter wind for three hours for the next troop train. Hospitably received by Captain Patterson and made comfortable in corridor carriage occupied by N.C.O.'s. No blankets, food or water bottles, except what our hosts could spare.

1916

November 26th

Sunday. Train crawled along a few yards at a time, owing to a breakdown ahead. We walked along the line hoping to catch up our own train but afraid to venture too far in case the block cleared. No luck, nothing but miles of munition trains, in one unbroken line. Nothing to eat but some dry bread and biscuits, and practically nothing to drink. Expected to get food at Abbeville which we reached at 11pm; informed us it would be ready at Etaples two hours further on, but train did not stop. Block cleared and we rushed through Calais and Boulogne during the night. Not much sleep on account of hunger and cold.

November 27th

Bright frosty morning. Passed St. Omer at 8am well into the flat farm lands of Flanders, with its canals, windmills and quaint houses. Stopped a few minutes at Hazebrouck our distributing centre, and then on to Bailleul where we thankfully detrained 9.30, only two hours behind the Ambulance. We were three dirty, crumpled and unshaven heroes that sat down to the most delightful breakfast of coffee, rolls and jam. Nearly cleared the estaminet out. A four mile walk brought us to Steenwerck where the Ambulance was just settling down to billets. An old school accomodated the men and served as our hospital. Vickers, Meehan and I were billeted with a delightful old couple, the place being as clean as a new pin. Lunch at the Cafe Anglais was delicious and afterwards visited Stacy No.2 C.C.S. at Trois Arbres just outside the village. A perfect sleep in a real bed with sheets and everything.

November 28th

Another easy day, chiefly looking round the place and absorbing atmosphere. An important military centre, practically out of range. Not far from Ploegsteert. Saw a captive balloon brought down and several aeroplane fights. Guns booming in the distance.

November 29th

I marched out at 9.30 with A section to take over Dressing Station at Armentieres from 103 F.Amb. (British). About 5 or 6 miles along a good pave road lined on either side by avenue of trees. Too cold to ride. Through Nieppe, our first sight of a badly battered village, then Pont de Nieppe, over the bridge, across the Lys into the large town of Armentieres. Officers billets 34 Rue Denis Pepin very comfortable and cosy, a fine house in excellent repair. M.D.S. in what was the Maternite, small but most suitable - in luck. The town (30,000 inhabitants) is practically deserted by civil population. Good deal knocked about by shells. British officers very courteous and hospitable.

November 30th

Nothing very special. Busy learning locality and shaking down.

December 1st

Took over from 103rd F. Amb. and they left for Erquighen. The A.D.S. is a couple of miles up near the front. Rest of our show came in from Steenwerck. Plenty doing rearranging and reorganising the M.D.S. I sleep there in a pleasant steam-heated room.

1916

December 4th

Gas alarm given about 6pm. Everybody dons masks and stands by; nothing doing. Again at midnight we are roused by strombos - horns, bells and whistles. Box-respirators very efficient. A good deal of work, though not many casualties; plenty sickness and trench-foot. Fairly cold and wet.

December 10th

Preparing to hand over to Meehan. Fritz took the opportunity of strafing the town with H.E.; a few casualties and some damage to buildings. We retaliated well at 1am.

December 11th

Col. Maguire left for England as child is ill. I was detailed as R.M.O. to Div. Engineers. Plenty of work as had to visit 3 Coys. in Rue de Flandres, the transport at Le Hays Farm and others at Steenwerck.

December 12th

Visited Bailleul and Caestre with Onley to get stores.

December 13th

Some strafing of the town going on, spent most of the night at the M.D.S. in the cellars, but nothing much occurred. Had lunch at Le Hays with Cox and Joe Clonan. Vickers wounded in back.

December 14th

To Bailleul and Hazebrouck with Onley; called on Duboise in charge of Red Cross and collected Xmas presents for our patients. Not feeling too good.

December 15th

Influenza and so did not get up; day in bed quite good. In fact stopped there two.

December 17th

Not too brisk but pottered round and retired from the R.M.O. job.

December 20th

Came up in morning to relieve Leeds at A.D.S. Old brick-kiln in fairly good repair. Cosy and comfortable; plenty wood for fires and everything else needful. Smoke-stack used as O.P. by British battery; officers come down to my dug-out to warm. Still snowing solidly. General Haig around and so things are fairly quiet.

December 21st

Clear bright day, good for 'planes; a few fights but none brought down. Fairly solid strafing going on here and on our right! Rats large and voracious round these parts; "Ginger Mick" the cat too lazy.

1916

December 22nd

Down the line to look round; along Lothian Av. and Porteagle Av. Fairly quiet till 12.15 when Fritz started sending over some Minnies and 5.9's. Near the cookhouse when it went up in a cloud of coal dust and dixies. Can't hear rifle, machinegun or .77 stuff till it zipps past. Can see Minnies and have a short warning of 5.9. Can walk about fairly exposed during daytime; non bon at night.

December 23rd

Up the chimney to see the view, solid climb about 200ft; iron staples. Could see Fritz and his habits through Perenchies to Lille. Blowing a hurricane, smokestack swaying to it.

December 24th

Clear sunny day. Plenty planes up and Archies busy. 11th Brigade took over from 9th and Fritz was busy with whizz-bangs. Both sides fairly active. Iron Carols. 'Peace on earth, goodwill toward men', what a ghastly mockery! There have been more broken, torn and bleeding men arriving here this Xmas eve than any previous time since my arrival. Friends and acquaintances among the wounded and dead make one wonder why fine fellows should be gathered together to be massacred by machines. In the middle of our work, the Xmas gifts arrived from Australia; greatly appreciated. Good to know all our loved ones are so far away from the tragedy of war.

December 25th

Xmas day. Big raid carried out at 3am by 33rd Batt, so expected lot of casualties. None happened, the raiders didn't even see a Boche. Slept in a bit later to celebrate the day. Strafing started early, Fritz dropping a few H.E. round us. Plenty visitors all day, so things were not too bad; food very plentiful. All the boys had an easy day and appeared to enjoy themselves. Officers mess in town had fine old Xmas dinner, came out in a body to pay me a visit in the afternoon. Fine fireworks display all the evening with solid strafe up Houplines way. The ruined windmill where Michael O'Leary won his V.C. is just at our back door, and helps to supply us with firewood.

December 26th

Boxing day. Foggy and cold, all the ponds and puddles frozen. Not much doing during the day. A.M.C. men don't wear brassards as it makes them conspicuous. Have to face same risks as combatants without the comfortable feeling of having a gun. Gas picquet at night weird, with nothing for self-defence.

December 27th

Still too foggy for good observing. C.O. and Major Anderson along to see about moving R.A.P. to '5 dugouts'. Some strafing during the morning. The overhead trolley in roof makes sound like approaching shell, fine for startling newcomers. A few whizz-bangs fell around kiln. Vickers returned from Hospital. The loneliness here becomes depressing - homesick. Keith's birthday tomorrow does not tend to make matters better. The prospects of peace within a reasonable time makes the outlook cheerier.

1916

December 28th

Real hoar frost all the morning, as white as a fall of snow. Nothing special happening anywhere. Had dinner with 175th Brigade Artillery B.F.F. and drank Keith's health; excellent billets, good dinner and music.

December 29th

Fairly cold and slushy, and windy. Busy filling sandbags and puddling with clay to make whole place gasproof. Heavy strafing by our batteries all the afternoon, some reply from Fritz. On my way to afternoon tea with Jones of 103rd F.Amb. Walking under large tiled shed, the whole thing crashed down from wind and shell fire. Narrow shave, skipped like a young ram.

December 30th

My last day here, am to be relieved by Hunter in the morning. C.O. Maj. Lind and some Engineer officers dropped in before I was up - 9.30am! Poured during the night and much water had penetrated the roof to the discomfiture of our men. Busy with water-picquets, gas ditto, making roof water-tight, propping up the decrepit verandah posts, road mending, foraging etc with rare interludes of medical work. Donovan sent to C.C.S. with his old trouble rheumatism. Have read in the last few days 'Prester John', 'No. 5 John St.', 'The Oyster' and 'Woodside Farm'. Am sorry to be leaving here in many ways, plenty to do, see and fellows to meet, but as night starts at 4 o'clock and all lights have to be screened from the outside, the evenings are long and dreary. Controversy with Col. Mooreshead and Rosenthal in connection with Xmas raid in progress. Solid bombardment by our guns most of the evening, fine sight.

December 31st

Back to billets 34 Rue Denis Pepin; nice to be home again. Take on messing job pro tem. With Meehan in afternoon to see Donovan at No. 2 C.C.S. Saw Maj. Sneddon 35th Batt; still pretty bad. Afternoon tea with Stacy. Boches shelled the town at night, but slept through it.

1917

January 1st

Mild and fine. A.D.M.S. considered my note to Rosenthal discourteous. Col. Begg D.D.M.S. inspected Lancers. Concert in evening by the boys, very good. What will this year be like?

January 2nd

Round the town with interpreter on messing business; my first real view of it. Everything quiet.

January 3rd

Still Orderly Officer. Met young Buchanan of Burwood. Col. Purdy of 10th F.Amb. to dinner. Still mild though likely to rain. No home letter lately.

1917

January 4th

To Bailleul, Caestre, Hazebrouck and Shazeele with Honman and Onley. Said goodbye to Duboise who is leaving for Australia. Countryside quaint; dog wheels to drive chains and dogcarts with two dogs underneath or harnessed in front. Inhabitants do not wash. Pave roads constructed by Napoleon for his guns. Churches occupy centre of avenue.

January 5th

Went to band recital of 36th Batt. Met Bushell and Dibbs. Stacy and Burkitt to dinner. Considerable strafing in Houplines sector. Some shells on town during night.

January 6th

To No. 2 C.C.S. with Meehan to see Donovan. Met James of 7th F.A.B. Capt. Wells of M.G. to dinner.

January 7th

To C.C.S. and Bailleul with C.O. and Burkitt to trace Sgt. Tronton, who had gone on by No. 16 'Queen Mary' Ambulance train to base.

January 8th

To 34th Batt. at Jesus Farm to relieve Clarke. Much mud. Rode out to Blanche Maison to D.Coy; through miles of water. Saw Swallow and others of D.A.C. Dinner with Col. Lamb, Maj. Martin and Brodziac. Bitterly cold and very wet. Maj. Fouall and Lieut. Bennett at Blanche Maison. Farms warm and comfortable; square plan with refuse and straw pit in centre. Home made bread and home grown pork and bacon good. Some adventures with pony shying at steamrollers and lorries. Visited bombing school.

January 9th

Very wet. Local mud like thick pea soup and feet deep. Sanitation difficult. Men wash in ditches. Visited various farms in search of good drinking water; all doubtful. Farm houses hereabouts are not hygienic. Met Swallow and dined with him. Heavy strafing all day, and successful raid by 10th Brigade in evening. Paper man kicked by mule.

January 10th

Clear day and an hour's sunshine. Walked to transport lines amid much slush. In afternoon practise chlorine gas discharge. Gen. Dobson and all the heads present; box respirators perfect. Saw observation balloon brought down in flames by Hun plane. To dinner in evening with Swallow, Fonton, Col. Dowse and Dobell (Staff Capt English artillery). Excellent meal and pleasant evening.

1917

January 11th

Called before breakfast to see an A.M.C. chap called Leach who had taken an overdose of strychnine by mistake; he died very quickly. Sad affair as he was a nice boy and married. Rode out to Blanche Maison and had lunch; back with Whittock the Lewis gun officer. Fine day for ride though snowing slightly. Col. Maguire called in afternoon and told me it is fixed for me to be Adjutant of the 9th F. Amb. Excellent as I shall like the job. A belated letter from Els telling me that all is well there; good. At the farms they bury their vegetables in a big heap of mud covered with straw to keep them.

January 12th

A cold wet ride to Blanche Maison, water on roads still high. These farms with the quaint lytch gate and the pond of mud just inside. Then the bricked-depression containing stable manure and assorted refuse and filth. Ducks and fowls walk up plank ladder to their loft. Pump between house and refuse lake.

January 13th

Tried to reach Blanche Maison by car with Onley but water too high. Clarke returned in afternoon and so home to 34 Rue Denis Pepin in evening by car. Driving by night through crowded traffic without lights is an anxious job.

January 14th

Definitely appointed Adjutant and work begins. All fairly quiet and normal.

January 15th

Our Artillery are here and several of them dropped in; nice to meet them again. Still cold and muddy.

January 16th

Snowing a bit and fairly cold. Capt. Stevens joined our party. Busy most of the day in Orderly room.

January 17th

Heavy snow during the night and ground beautifully white. Took a run into Steenwerck on business.

January 18th

By car to Remy close to Poperinghe near Ypres; could hear the guns of Ypres very plainly. Belgium does not appear to be very different to the neighbouring parts of France. Snow over everything and very cold driving.

January 19th

Col. Shellshear, Swallow, Fonton and a few others dropped in during the day. Snow is freezing and the roads are dry and even dusty.

January 20th

Some fairly heavy artillery work going on; a few shells into the town. Still frozen snow.

1917

January 21st

Cold and frozen; snow not at all melted. Col. Simpson and Lieut. McGrath of 36th Batt. killed by Minnie. Had dinner in evening with Satchell, Brodziac and Col. Lamb at Au Boeuf; good feed.

January 22nd

Funeral of Col. Simpson very impressive; the mantle of snow on the grave-mounds quite beautiful. No fuss or prolongation about the ceremony. Called away to our stations by dispatch rider. Some big raids and heavy bombardment all night. Over 20 degrees below zero.

January 23rd

My tea and hot shaving water arrived together, and by the time I had drunk the tea, the shaving water was a cake of ice. Ice on bath water an inch thick, breath freezes on window panes. Mighty cold but sun is shining for about the first time since we arrived. A few planes up, one Hun machine winged. Intermittent strafing all round. Letters from home and all well, good news. The Huns got onto our gun positions and did some damage. Some shells in the town, rather adjacent.

January 24th

Cold still intense, but clear and sunny. River Lys frozen over. Mud of roads frozen and ground like cement. Roads very dusty like midsummer in Australia. Medicine in bottles freezes solid; towels freeze stiff after use; shaving brushes, soap, basins all glued down solid with ice. Thermometer registers 20 degrees below freezing point. Can't wash horses or cars as the water freezes when applied. Petrol pipe in car frozen and brakes frozen on. Of course all taps have ceased to run unless you light a bonfire round them.

January 25th

Went to C.C.S. No. 2 to dinner with C.O. Mighty cold trip. Dined in our British warms and mufflers. Had game of bridge. Hun aeroplanes dropped a few bombs nearby and killed some horses; nearly got some of their own people at prisoners camp. Had some of the cake Grace sent to Barton.

January 26th

Anniversary Day. Still freezing. Went to lecture by Prof. Adkins at Ecole Professionale on causes of the war - an excellent lecture. A good deal of artillery activity during afternoon and night.

January 27th

Kaiser's birthday - curse him. Expected a busy time but things passed off quietly enough. Took over A.D.S. from 103rd F.Amb., as the 34th Division went out of the line; means a good deal wider front for us to clear and probably more work.

January 28th

Cold snap continues and the thermometer stays down at zero. Coldest weather for over twenty years. Thank heavens it's colder still in Germany and the Huns must be feeling it more. We have ample food and warm clothing. Our fellows standing it well.

1917

January 29th

Skating and slides are the chief amusements locally, causing a few minor injuries. Too cold to sit down and write or settle to anything indoors. Our dining room stove is a failure and causes much cursing. Had tea at Lucienne's with A.D.M.S., D.A.D.M.S., Maj. Borwick, Lieut. Gad and C.O.

January 30th

More ice and zero weather. Mighty chilly getting up in mornings, and bed the best place in evenings. Aeroplane dropped a couple of bombs near here, making a great mess. Planes are up every day during this spell of sunshine. Archies are quite busy and dot the sky with puffs of cotton wool, usually a fair distance from the plane, though quite a number brought down lately round here.

January 31st

Busy night with casualties. Started to arrive about 9.30pm and we carried on in the theatre until 7.30am next morning; mostly from 10th Brigade through our night A.D.S. (Maj. Lind). Attended to 51 cases, mostly severe, due to Minnies.

February 1st

Had bit of sleep in afternoon, rather tired after night's stunt. Too cold to sleep much, even with fire going. Fortunately we can get plenty wood from A.D.S.

February 2nd

Walked up to A.D.S. to have look round, good exercise, and keeps one warm for a few minutes. Knitted mitts and mufflers very necessary.

February 3rd

Still same temperature; about zero. Satchell and I to A.D.S. for dinner with Lind and Meehan. Pleasant evening.

February 4th

Sundays don't count much here, we hardly know them when they arrive. Walked to Engineers to see Maj. Williams. Plenty of skating in full swing on frozen Lys; ice about eight inches thick; all barges and river traffic held up.

February 5th

Talk of America joining in with Allies on account of submarine campaign; all ships to be torpedoed. Will they still be too proud to fight? Heavy bombardment during afternoon. Using gas shells freely round about; got some N.Z. men at Fleaubaix.

February 6th

On Board with Kenny to examine P.B. men, went to Steenwerck, Croix de Bac and Erquighen. Cold motoring this weather.

February 7th

Went to Baths in afternoon. Nice hot bath and clean change; good.

February 8th

Mighty cold still. Bright and sunny. Aeroplane fights and strafing with 'Archies'.

1917

February 9th

To Remy for Lecture at No. 3 C.C.S. Went on practically to Ypres, heavy artillery firing. Afternoon tea at Club, Poperinghe. Passed Prince of Wales and his suite. Broke down about mile from Poperinghe, towed to No. 594 Coy. A.S.C. ; very obliging and nice mess. Knocked man down just this side of Bailleul. Walked about to Steenwerck. Arrived home about 10pm.

February 10th

Birthday; letter from Mater. All well. To baths with Satchell. Dinner at 'Au Boeuf' with him and Playfair. Most enjoyable; bottle of 'Pont et Carnet' 98.

February 11th

Starting to thaw; the dust melting into mud; signs of slush everywhere. Preparations for big raid by Tyneside Scottish in evening. Honman to Loading Post at Sweide Corner. Lind, self, Meehan, Kelly, Samson, Satchell at M.D.S. Vickers at Chapel Institute St. Jude. Early raid at 8.15, then big stunt at 10.30. Heavy artillery bombardment for 3/4 hour. We worked through till breakfast, put through 80. Two Hun prisoners brought along, one of them a Red Cross man.

February 12th

Pretty tired, carried on till after lunch, and then slept till dinner. Another raid in evening but only got 8 or 10 wounded back.

February 13th

Thaw continuing, sky cloudy once more and mud resumed sway. Big German raid at 4am; heavy bombardment by 'Minnies'. Our artillery reply tremendous, everything up to 12 inch gun on railway. Hun trenches knocked to bits. Moon hidden by smoke, dust, boards etc. Huns entered trench and called on "Newcastle's Own" 35th to surrender. They gathered bombs and slew Huns.

February 14th

Bright and frosty once more, but fairly warm. 'Planes buzzing like big bees; couple of fights, hear the tut-tut-tut of the emma gees. White puffs of the bursting shrapnel. To Baths in afternoon with Satchell. Wonderful organization baths! Dirty men and dirty clothes in thousands turned out clean in every detail. Had glass of wine in Estaminet, where Dad had been for 70 years; lighting pipe with bits of stick at stove.

February 15th

Heavy bombardment all day. Some shells in town and a few aeroplane fights. Went up to A.D.S. and along trenches.

February 16th

Another raid during night and about 30 or 40 casualties. Our raids not a great success so far, many wounded and few prisoners. Huns have dug-outs with steel doors. Seven pounds of gun cotton by demolition party usually settle them. Otherwise Ammonol bombs dropped down ventilating funnel. Heavy bombardment by all guns from 18 pounders to 12 inch rail guns on trains.

1917

February 17th

Thaw setting in, mud starting and Thaw Precautions in force. Plenty mud and slush in trenches. Successful raid by N.Z. and Dutch just to north of us. N.Z. troops had recently been caught by gas-shells at Bois-Grenier. Dinner at Au Boeuf in evening.

February 18th

Quiet day. Walked to Le Bizet in afternoon, on the road to Ploegsteert.

February 19th

To Bailleul with Onley and Lind. Picked up Chief of Interpreters at Croix de Bac, who told us where to get good lace. No. 12 Rue de Viviers (Stace). Two old dames, the eldest working rapidly making lace with about 20 bobbins. Afternoon tea at Cafe Salome, very English and up to date. Our purchases of lace (dentelle) and insertion (entre deux) satisfactory.

February 20th

Another raid at night and a few cases. Donovan returned from Cap Martin, Mentone looking fit. Kelly sent to La Motte and Hunter acts as Sanitary Officer. Some heavy firing going on.

February 21st

Expected inspection by Corps Commander but did not eventuate. Rumours of move to another part of line. Expected another raid at night but too foggy.

February 22nd

Left at 9am for School at Estaines. McMahon from 10th F. Amb. and Ken from Pioneers. Called at D.R.S. Lestrade to pick up Love of 11th F. Amb. Down through Bas St. Maur and Saily to large Chateau where School is held. Four from N.Z. and four from 57 Div. Col. Murray from N.Z. in charge. Lecture in afternoon on Military Law. Bridge in evening. Drill in morning, lectures, lunch and lecture in afternoon by D.A.D.M.S. N.Z. ; funny. Walked around Estaines, along canal and to La Gorque, Hotel de Ville built in 1612 by Spaniards. Estaines was capital of Spanish Netherlands. The adventures described in Three Musketeers took place in these parts mentioning Erquighen, Bas St. Maur and the Lys.

February 23rd

Away at 8.30 to visit N.Z. D.R.S. at Nouveau Monde, then out to water barges on Lys at Jesus Farm. Each barge can absolutely purify 4000 gallons of water per hour; alum and bleach for an hour, sand filter and more bleach. Home for lunch then walked to No. 1 A.C.C.S. Col. Dick. Fine building and good work. Another walk round the town, into the old Church and other places of interest. At D.R.S. are the trenches already made, with duck boards and all, of our 8th line. Heavy bombardment can be heard up Armentieres way. Interesting to see the barges and motor boats of I.W.T. running up the Lys.

1917

February 24th

More drill in morning, quite amusing to watch Cheesman N.Z. as blank file. Izard, Kemp and Widderson N.Z. good chaps. Izard was Court Physician to King of Tonga before war; called Toobo-marlochi, and a very high Chief or Prince; his account of native customs interesting. To Gas School at Nouveau Monde afterwards. In afternoon down to Neuf Berquin two or three miles away.

February 25th

Sunday, but no alteration of programme. Lecture and bridge filled in time.

February 26th

Some duds and Archie fragments fell in parade ground. Watched Hun prisoners loading barges on Lys. To La Gorque; early outrages there. Nine to return to Armentieres for big raid by X Batt. McMahon and I got back in time for dinner; dummy bombardment at 9.45 and real one at 12.30am. A tremendous row. Raid successful, 17 prisoners, hundreds of Huns killed, search light and machine guns; about 120 wounded among our fellows.

February 27th

Returned at about 10am to School; rather weary. Lectures had soporific effect. To Estaminet Salome afterwards. Old Chester (Jeffcott) returned to No. 1 C.C.S. , septic lip.

February 28th

To end of course; lectures, bridge, tea rooms, estaminets and a pleasant time generally. To Pierrot Show one evening, top hole. Whole School enjoyable.

March 4th

Sunday morning examination or 'appreciation'. After lunch return to Billets. A.D.M.S., D.A.D.M.S., Brissenden, Woodruff and Blacklow all in for afternoon tea. Vickers just been made a Major. Satchell and I walked up the Barbed Wire Square, Houplines to call on Playfair; guns busy. Capt. Grant of 36th Batt. was there, just out of the line; told us of his Brigade of Rifle-grenade artillery, countering effects of Pineapple fire.

March 5th

Heavy fall of snow, everything covered once more with the white fleece. Had photo taken again. Very quiet on front for a change.

March 6th

Rumours of move somewhere soon. Capt. Young fell off horse so I am once more R.M.O. Engineers. Through heavy fall of snow to L'Epinette. Snow blowing like dust across the fields.

March 7th

We are leaving for Ploegsteert sector very shortly. To give up Dressing Stations at once. Will be a pleasant change to see a new part of world. Travelling Circus of 48 heavy guns arrived today; trouble brewing for Fritz.

1917

March 8th

Shells into Jute Factory by Cemetery. Civilians killed and wounded, mostly women and girls. Vickers to be D.A.D.M.S. while Anderson is in London.

March 9th

Everything handed over to 11th and 57th Division. A holiday for all of us for a change. Expect to leave any day or night; standing by awaiting orders. Much strafing.

March 10th

Detailed to take charge of party to parade before Distinguished Stranger (Nathan Long). Picked up Bill Dunn with a game knee, car broke down, got another and were held up by traffic police. Missed the show; explanation required. To dinner with Tommy Swallow and his Battery; quite pleasant.

March 11th

Not gone yet, general parade of men in morning and inspection of billets. In afternoon Lind, Satchell and I went to Estaines and had some Heidsick at the place of Lucille and her married sister; met Col. Murray and Kemp. Dinner at Nouveau Monde served by Toinette. Fort Rompu near there has fine M.D.S. occupied by 57th Div.

March 12th

Went with C.O. over Ploegsteert region. Very muddy and very shattered. N.Z. troops have improved things immensely. Fine A.D.S. at foot of Hill 63 and another at Brewery. Went to Motor Car Corner and R.A.P. at Sussex Farm. In evening Satch and I to dinner with John Playfair at the Battery. Went up O.P. after dinner to watch shoot at a search light. Swallow's Battery broke up after raid.

March 13th

Nice and warm. Took A Sect. down to Erquighen Baths. For walk in afternoon and watched game of football, like old times. Big raid and gas emission tonight, so not much sleep I expect. Intense bombardment by Travelling Circus etc.

March 14th

Moved across to Pont de Nieppe. M.D.S. just behind the Church. Fine site, horse lines excellent. Plenty of work to be done. Our mess in butcher's shop on main street. C.O. and I live above. Very comfortable. Bed massive and is moved on tram lines. Nice and soft and springy; real sheets and a nice eiderdown.

March 15th

Busy on job of cleaning things up. Orderly Room is old school room and I'm perched at Master's desk. Bombardment cellars are small and unsatisfactory.

March 16th

Went up the line to Motor Car Corner, Surrey Farm, The Brewery and Charing Cross. Well pasted with shells.

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March 17th

Inspection by General Godley, Col. Begg, A.D.M.S., etc. Very satisfactory; horse lines, harness etc looking good. Walked with Satchell down L'EpINETTE road and across pontoon bridge. The Travelling Circus still busy.

March 18th

Visited the front lines again. Ploegsteert very battered and knocked about. Beyond Charing Cross (3 elephants) is Hill 63 and the Piggeries. Active shelling in progress.

March 19th

Walked round Nieppe and back by farm road; cultivation very close. Clear day and many aeroplanes visible.

March 20th

To Bailleul with Onley. Some snow and sleet. Still very cold and unpleasant.

March 21st

The show running smoothly but everyone busy. Carting bricks for Pont d'Achelles new M.D.S. from Houplines. walked into Armentieres and renewed our acquaintance with it. Plenty of 'Sausages' and planes about.

March 22nd

Went to picture show next door in evening. Quiet day.

March 23rd

The village of Pont de Nieppe shelled with H.E. and seven civilians killed. Had just passed the spot a few minutes where fatalities occurred.

March 24th

More shelling, this time with shrapnel, mostly landing in our own show; one or two casualties. 5.9 stuff sent over, about a dozen.

March 25th

Sunday though none would know it. walked up lines again past Le Bizet and Chapel Rompue enjoying the Belgian scenery, which is typically Flanders.

March 26th

Hear I am appointed Adjutant to II Anzac M.O.'s Training School at Estaines. Excellent, 'twill be a pleasant change.

March 27th

Leave for Estaines and arrive there at 5pm. Some more shelling during morning at our M.D.S. Fine quarters in the Chateau.

March 28th

Run to Steenwerck through Donlieu with Col. Murray; dined with 2nd N.Z. F. Amb. Pleasant times though very cold.

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March 29th

The next class starts tomorrow Friday. Took a run to La Motte in Foret de Nieppe. Very interesting and ancient. Into Steenwerck again for dinner.

March 30th

The School opens today and things are fairly busy getting ready. Took a run into merville to get some things for mess. The class arrived before lunch; 6 of 57th, 4 Australians and 2 N.Z.

March 31st

Drill by me in morning, rather funny.

April 1st

More drill down in the paddock. Lecture on Correspondence. Meet all the Lecturers. With Col. Murray to Salome's and Lucille's and her married sister. learning abit of French.

April 5th

Ordinary routine trips to Gas School on the hills overlooking Bailleul, to Nouveau Monde, water barges (Jesus Farm) and Pierrots (Tykes) at La Gorque. An occasional glass of wine at the Estaminets.

April 10th

School broken up and the good fellows back home. Called in at No.2 N.Z. F. Amb. at Steenwerck and then home to Pont de Nieppe after an excellent time. New people and new surroundings are a delightful change. Dyer, Porter and Bridson killed.

April 15th

Several stunts on in the line and pretty busy. Inspected by various people including Gen. Howse. Pretty regular shelling of the village and several civilians killed; a good place to get out of. Am kept hard at it as Adjutant these days.

April 20th

We are to move down to the new Corps Dressing Station at Pont d'Achelles on the Romarin - Bailleul Rd. corner. A welcome change.

April 22nd

Moving out to new station. It is a fine collection of 6 large Nissens and 20 small ones. A tremendous amount of work to be done getting it ship shape. The trees are just showing signs of spring and should be pretty very soon. Right on an important corner and sure to be shelled. Roads to be built, fences to erect, paths to lay out and a hundred and one things. Should be very interesting.

April 25th

Satchell transferred hurriedly to No. 1 C.C.S. Estaines and Capt. Bennett arrived in his stead.

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April 30th

Have had many inspections by Col. Begg, Major Thompson A.D.M.S., Gen. Porter and many others. The place is beginning to look wonderfully well. Everybody at work on the road (Boomerang), cook houses, gardens, lawns, duck boards, Dressing Rooms. All working like ants. Have had a good many runs to Armentieres, Steenwerck, Bailleul, fletre, Caestre, Hazebrouck, Shazeele, Menin, etc. Also up to Ploegsteert (much shelled). Miss Satch very much. The work of organizing here is most interesting and keeps one busy day and night.

May 5th

The country is beginning to look gorgeous, carpets of flowers, hawthorn hedges abloom and bursting into leaf. Much drier and everything fine. Run in touring car to St. Omer with C.O. and Onley and back through Cassel; the latter is perched on top of a very high hill that overlooks the country for many miles. Mont des Cats nearby has an old Trappist monastery on top.

May 10th

Plenty of work still, both medical and constructive. About two Generals inspect each day. Big things doing. Shelled heavily all night with H.E. Got patients away. Romarin and Neuve Eglise got it hot, many N.Z. killed. Dinner and Kiwis with Col. Hardie Neill at No. 3 F.Amb. Visited Satch at Estaines and brought him back. Hear that Meehan, Vickers and Donovan are to get Majorities. Chaplain Wilson arrived; a good sort.

May 15th

Trips on duty to Red Cross, Bailleul and Steenwerck baths. Solid work preparing big things. More shelling and gas attack. Eight or twelve inch naval guns firing at railway nearby. Intense strafing going on all the time. Many men and guns arriving.

May 20th

Poor Honman killed by Gas shell with 37th Batt. at Rifle House. Engaged to girl in Armentieres. 4th Division arrived to back us up. Heavy counter battery work and several Hun raids. Went to La Motte to pay Onley; gorgeous trip. Baron de la Grange is with Joffre in America; King has stopped there.

May 21st

Up to Charing Cross to relieve Lind for funeral. Heavy shelling and activity by Swallow's guns. Ploegsteert wood is most beautiful now in its spring suit. Paddy Meehan has joined 11th F. Amb. The big hows are coming up without ceasing and ammunition by hundreds of tons. Trouble coming to Fritz. Days are warm but nights fairly cool. No.1 C.C.S. has moved up to Bailleul and Satch has got his Captaincy.

May 22nd

Run in to Bailleul to D.D.M.S. and Advanced Depot Med. Stores. Met Satch and with him to Officers Club. Huge guns and hows everywhere lining the roads; caterpillars and tractors puffing merrily; traffic like George St. Very busy preparing dressing, catching tents, Red Cross supplies and comforts.

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May 23rd

Inspection by General Plumer 2nd Army Commander and his staffer Gen. Porter. Quite satisfactory. Particularly interested in Oxygen apparatus for gassed cases.

May 24th

Visit from Lieut. Cols. Wassell and Follett of 4th Div. Also their D.A.D.M.S. More guns and ammunition arriving; 6, 8, 10 and 12 inch affairs. It is overwhelming. A few Hun planes up. Large dump blew up with large bang. Weather still gorgeous and country more lovely than ever. Donovan evacuated to No. 2 C.C.S. for the second time suffering from rheumatism. Furiously at work dolling everything up and completing preparations for Magnum Opus. Twenty five marquees erected and camouflaged; 5000 blankets, 2000 stretchers; the place groaning with supplies. Directing boards, night lights, tables, etc ready. A fascinating time to be sharing in; the hugeness of the undertaking is beyond conception. Padre Wilson has taken great fancy to Bin. Vickery reported for duty. Fed at Martha's.

May 25th

Roads full to overflowing of troops, munitions and guns of every size. Munition dumps slopping all over the place; frequently go off with a large bang when Fritz gets on to them. The men from 10th, 11th, 4th, 12th and 13th are dropping on us. Williams and Glassford, Chaplin and Jouet, Woolard, Bentley, Curtin, Mitchell and Trimble. Rather chaotic at present. Much work ahead devising systems and working out methods. Raids every night and some in this direction. 60 pounders, 6 inches and bigger get busy. 'Quick Dick', the Hun's 11 inch naval gun sends a few over to cheer us; one dud buried 22 ft deep.

May 26th

The trials of an Adjutant are manifold; everybody wants everything done their way at once; a galley slave lived the quiet life. However have hopes of shaping things satisfactorily. Plenty of 'planes and raids.

May 27th

Still toiling; laborious days, scorning delights. Clerical system taking shape. Retiring from job of Mess Secretary, Trimble gets busy. Shoving through numerous patients; every time a shell goes off it must hit either a dump or some men. Gas scare; 57th Div. got windy.

May 28th

Inspection by General Birdwood accompanied by Col. Begg. Alert, active man, slight stammer; throws a good line. In morning had visit from Consulting Physician to Army and American major to see if oxygen st... for gassed cases. Guns, guns, guns all the time; when they all go off together 'twill be noisy. Roads solid with them. This show is developing nicely in spite of difficulties; but much remains to be done. The 'Heads' think up some prize scheme and leave us to worry it out. Moral, be a 'Head'.

1917

May 29th

Still carrying on with the good work. Raids and noise every night. Hun planes visit regularly every morning and the 'Archies' shower bits and duds on us. Planes drop spies behind Hun lines, with a box of pigeons and get lots of information. A chap in today was knocked out by a bomb, stripped by Huns at their wire, and did not wake up till one of our mortars blew him into the air; he got back and reached us.

May 30th

The country is more gorgeous than ever now, except for the dust that the lorries and trucks kick up. Our own little garden looks good, and the potatoes are showing up fine. The local inhabitants are beginning to clear out 'toute suite'. A few Colonels and things look us over each day.

May 31st

Not feeling too brisk and energetic after my strenuous existence; however things are progressing O.K. Col. Ramsay Webb from No. 2 C.C.S. blew in. Huns shelled Bailleul last night. Great front seat view of our observation balloon being strafed by a Hun plane. The plane flew low and fast, fired a few shots, the tracer bullets showing like lines of flame, circled round twice and the balloon went up in flames. The observers just dropped in time and got away. A plucky performance in the face of Archies and Hotchkiss fire. 'Planes, shells, hows. Visit from Sir Antony Boulby and somebody Watson. Myriads of casualties. Dinner at Martha's. Satch, Anderson and all the 9th. Tis very sad parting with Hughie Meehan, Lind and Vickers. Somebody said; love to Mrs. H. Heaps of fizz and heaps of sadness. This what makes for pals. Lind now O.C. 9th F. Amb.

June 1st

Big T.M. dump blown up near Hyde Park Corner, many killed and wounded. Much labour organising but things are shaping. Our planes are mighty busy these days of bright sunshine. Triplanes, spads, Nieuport chasers and scouts (silver fish) are dotted all over the sky. See a few brought down in circles occasionally. Our big guns are roaring away as hard as they can go. Hun balloons watch us steadily over Motor Car Corner and Messines.

June 2nd

Many cases come through day and night. Dumps go up regularly, they can hardly miss them. Shells of all sizes, plum puddings and flying pig everywhere. 'Quick Dick' put one near Bailleul and wrapped a man completely up with torn telegraph wire without injuring him. Our guns are laying for master Dick. Practice barrage by all our guns; some noise. Still clean, beautiful and dusty. Shower bath goes well.

June 3rd

Sunday, and Padre Wilson holds services here. Ammunition convoy (motor lorries) blown up; great flame. All our planes up and not too many Fritz; a few fights. More barrages. G.R.V. are making trench graves in our pretty field for future and present use. Two more padres join us. Raids and intense fire at night; many places ablaze. Samson wounded.

1917

June 4th

Fierce Hun fire on our Batteries, front, support and subsidiary lines. Ploegsteert Wood full of gas. Dumps going up all over the place with loud crashes. Shelling Connaught Railway Yards, and the naval guns thereabouts. Our guns are strangely quiet, though many blown out; the big guns are right forward.

June 5th

Ammunition train bombed by Hun 'plane near Bailleul; immense bang and all windows there broken. Huns shelling batteries heavily; many casualties. Jute factory by Lys in Armentieres ablaze last night from Hun shells. Pont de Nieppe badly strafed too. Rutledge (T.M.) killed. Penny and Allworth of Tommy Swallow's battery killed by direct hit on dug out. Playfair, Borwick, Williams (Engineers) D.S.O.'s. The 9th men moved out in evening to Hyde Park Corner; Lind, Vickers, Hunter and Padre Wilson with them. Leeds is with 7th F.A.B. Our barrage started at 9.30pm and is still going on; good luck to everybody. Wind dangerous and a possibility of gas. Messines Ridge a mass of dust and smoke. So far the Huns are not retaliating much. Good luck to the stunt. Fellows who have been through it all say the Huns shelling of the last week has eclipsed anything on the Somme at Amiens or Vimy.

June 6th

Hot sultry and stormy. No sleep all night; cases and cases and then some. Shell and tear gas. Crashing of shells and our 'heavies'. In morning our late home at Pont de Nieppe heavily shelled and knocked about. Streams of casualties. The factory by our baths there well ablaze. Biff and bang all day. Swallow and Fonton down for Penny's funeral. Lent Swallow towel, shaving gear etc, as his was blown out. The show in running order now; N.Z. men arrived to help us. As I am writing on "Y" night, with "Z" only a few hours off, and the 'heavies' are due to open up for the final selection before the curtain rises on what may well be the biggest thing ever attempted in the war. All the men say the Somme, Bullecourt, etc were a kid's game to what we've been getting lately.

June 7th

I've been up all night of course fixing the final arrangements. At about 3 o'clock (am) the bombardment started; preluded by a mine under Messines Ridge (countless tons of Ammonol). Our saps tunnelled right under the hill for the troops to march through them and up out of the crater. Rations for several days in the tunnels. The bombardment was immense and continued with intense fire for about 1/2 hour. Then our lads went over. The Hun poured in gas shells all the while and we got hundreds of cases, and some ourselves. Flammerwerfers, liquid fire, thermit shells, emma gees, etc added to the horror. Hundreds of Huns killed by the time our attack was entirely successful. Tanks got into action later. Our 'planes were entirely magnificent. Casualties started early; mostly gassed. We worked all night and all day getting them clear. N.Z. people splendid; everything going like clock work. Walking cases by road and narrow gauge railway. M.A.C. cases cleared well. S/Sgt. Hoskings died of wounds. Our 'planes everywhere. Hear the stunt is a great success everywhere. Plenty of wounded Huns in. Night scene at C.M.D.S. brilliant and impressive.

1917

June 8th

Turned in about 6am for 3 or 4 hours after about 45 hours on deck. Casualties eased off a bit during day. Visit from Surgeon General Sloggett and the A.G. (Fawke) sent up by Haig as his A.D.S. representative were held up. Generals Macpherson, Porter and Boulby called. All good! Huns counter attacked at about 9pm and our guns cut them to bits. The big guns 'shows' are away forward doing wonders. A 12 inch naval gun is in the wood near the Connaught Yards, and a few 6 inch are between us and Romarin. Our box barrage caught Fritz in a death trap. Our boys are well over in front of Messines and consolidated. Enormous row still in progress. Am turning in now at 2am, dead to the world, done to a frazzle. Our own unit has been superb. The whole show is working like well oiled machinery.

June 9th

Intense bombardment all night and morning. The mines under Messines, Wytehaete, and Hill 60. 1,000,000 lbs of Ammonol seem to have created a sensation. Work much slacker. Everything good. The stunt is proceeding merrily. We put through over 2,500 in the first 24 hours. Sir Anthony Boulby and Harvey Cushing (U.S.A.) blew in for afternoon tea; said the forward medical work had been magnificent; beyond all conception. Plenty Huns in, Bavarians, fair headed Saxons, dark Prussians. Their sand bags worked from twisted paper thread took my fancy. S/Sergt. Hoskings died at 2 C.C.S. yesterday. The tanks have done well attacking 'strong points' and outing them. The whole stunt has run without a hitch.

June 10th

All the heads delighted with the brilliant success of the stunt. Wytschaete, Messines, Hill 60 were solid propositions. The contour map over by Connaught Yards occupying about an acre of grounds was the battle area in miniature. At present the Hun is shelling very heavily round Hyde Park Corner and Ploegsteert generally. Our cars can't run as the roads are damaged. It takes some shells to stop our boys. The C.M.D.S. is very empty now and everybody is resting. About 5000 patients through in the last 3 days. Heavy bombardment during night and our fellows took another strong point. plenty gas shells about. Pont de Nieppe and Nieppe shelled.

June 11th

Fairly quiet. A few Huns brought in from shell holes; gas gangrene and strong flavour. Bavarians, Saxons, Prussian Guards, etc; some big and strong, some young and frail. Visit from General Plumer and his staff; very satisfied. More shells and gas at night. As I write, "Quick Dick" is screaming overhead every minute or two and is after the railway across the field. Every time he lands, up goes a column of dust and smoke about 200 ft. high. The shells themselves are 4 ft. high, armour piercing, delayed action with br.. fuses. "Quick Dick" is on a railway switch near Lille. Our 12 inch naval railway gun potted at him for a couple of hours; each shell weighing about 5 cwt. Hospital train loaded for Boulogne. Very comfy. Anzac Mounted said to have entered Warneton today.

June 12th

Things fairly quiet, though some shelling of back areas. Some 'plane fights.

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June 13th

Another quiet uneventful day. 'Quick Dick' again busy round about. N.Z. attacked in front of Warneton; pretty deserted. Shelling of back areas at night. Pont de Nieppe and Nieppe still getting it.

June 14th

Perfect clear cloudless day. 15 'sausages' to be seen from here. Very quiet. Gen. Godley paid visit and compliments. While he was here, a tri-plane did wonderful stunts; corkscrew and nose dives; loop-the-loops etc. Flying just over our heads. 'Planes everywhere.

June 15th

Sudden order to close C.M.D.S. and rejoin units. Most excellent. Handed over to No.3 F. Amb. Fearfully hot. Left about 6pm for Donlieu to rest billets. Ambulance in most delightful farm. Hunter and I in tent in orchard beneath cherry and pear trees. Very tired.

June 16th

Slept about 12 hrs. Breakfast in bed about 10 o'clock; boiled eggs with French bread and coffee. A fine old farm, everything looking beautiful. Nothing to do but rest. No guns or war about, only a few 'planes. Satchell and 'Dad' Macartney visited us from No.1 C.C.S.

June 17th

Sunday. Much rest and feeling better. Sleep, eat, read. Rev. McCook to have service in our orchard; he did well at C.M.D.S. Still very hot and muggy.

June 18th

The farm is called Traisnel-Bourel after the owners. Fearfully hot; some thunder and rain. To Bailleul with C.O. Dinner as guest of Satch at Club. Vickers, Clive Thompson, Dad Macartney and us.

June 19th

More thunderstorms and rain. Trip through Vieux and Neuf Berquin to Merville with C.O. Dinner there.

June 20th

We are to move tomorrow up to Westhof up by Neuve Eglise. Hun 'plane brought down two of our balloons in flames. Carlile joined up today. Austin Curtin called, as the 12th are taking over here. Raining heavily.

June 21st

Unit moved off in morning through Steenwerck and La Creche to Westhof to take over from 77th F. Amb. 25th Div. Beautiful site on fine hill. Cold and muddy.

June 22nd

Settling down. Delightful to be in hilly country once more. Almost next door to Neuve Eglise. A few gas shells during night, fairly big stuff. Plenty of patients.

1917

June 23rd

Hun 'planes brought down three of our balloons in a row; all the observers jumped. Hun 'plane brought down like fallen leaf. More shelling.

June 24th

Sunday. Church in barn next door to us shelled and many Belgians, mostly women, killed; sad sight. Bombs dropped during night. Another of our balloons brought down in flames. Hun 'plane fell thousands of feet, winged, but recovered and got to its lines. Still cold and showery. settling down here. In evening C.O., Lind, Bennett and self walked to wood to see the tanks; 20 male (6 pounder guns), 20 female, man-killers (machine guns) and 20 supply tanks. Went inside and all round them; low roof, very cramped, hot and noisy. Supply tanks were the original ones used at Thiepval. extraordinary the way they trample out wire entanglements and cross trenches. Modern ones can go 12 m.p.h. Not much in use here; were at Ypres. Hun 'planes about 11pm started dropping bombs; about 50 dropped around us; large bangs, not many casualties. Very satisfactory to lie down flat. Some fires here and Bailleul. Good deal of shelling. Little sleep.

June 25th

Fairly hot. Plenty 'planes of all sorts. Spads, weary willies, triplanes, Nieuport chasers, etc. Route march with A sect. Some more bombs at night; also on Bailleul and Vieux Berquin.

June 26th

Some more balloons down; they are shelled with shrapnel with 15 cm (5.9) and 24 cm (9.2) guns from 16,000 and 22,000 yds. respectively. Much heavy shelling and casualties. Thunderstorms; balloon struck by lightning.

June 27th

Trip to D.H.Q. Ravelsberg. Rain and shells. Otherwise quiet.

June 28th

Pay day; busy. More 'Quick Dick' and 'Whistling Rufus'. Satch, Macartney, Stacy and Col. Shaw came back to see tanks and then to dinner. I applied for Paris leave.

June 29th

Offer of job O.C. La Motte, but turned down as unwise. More thunder and rain.

June 30th

All Paris leave stopped. Bad luck. Vickers going to La Motte. Couple of hun 'planes brought down. Heavy shelling with big stuff last night; hear they got onto the tanks in the wood. Americans have arrived in France. All of our last lot of letters lost on 'Mongolia'. Couple of 11th F. Amb. cars blown out at Kandahar Farm.

July 1st

Run down to La Motte with Vickers, through Outerseigne, Vieux Berquin and Neuf Berquin. More bombs and shells at night.

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July 2nd

Bailleul solidly bombed last night. General Holmes killed at Hyde Park Corner, sightseeing with Holman. Walked up to Neuve Eglise with C.O.

July 3rd

Very fed up and want a spell. Things are fairly slack. Balloons shraped.

July 4th

King looked around the district; we saw him at corner of Nesihof and Waterloo roads. He was with General Plumer; next car Prince of Wales and Duke of Connaught. Guns quiet on account of the visit. Many gas shells and bombs last night.

July 5th

Daily round and fed upness.

July 6th

Bombs again.

July 7th

Heaps of planes and bombs last night. No. 11 C.C.S. bombed and machine gunned; 25 killed 60 wounded. No bon. Gen. Godley presented decorations at Hillside Camp, Neuve Eglise.

July 8th

I slept out again last night, awakened by much rain and enormous thunder. Hear that our mail has again been sunk coming and going.

July 9th

Some rain and muck. C.O. and I walked in afternoon to Clapham Junction and almost to Dramontre. The hills of Kemmel, Mont Noir and Mont des Cats beautiful in setting sun. Locre church with its square tower right in front; Major Willie Redmond buried there.

July 10th

Moved to D.R.S. Bailleul with A section; others went to L'Estrade; shelled along the de Seul road by 'Quick Dick'. Bailleul place is a large mansion with huge double entrance gates, square courtyard and a small orchard. Took over from 10th; very dirty.

July 11th

Am billeted at No. 1 Rue Benoit Cortyl; delightfully clean, nice dame. D.R.S. is in Rue La Musee. Plenty of work sorting things out. Many bombs during night and 'Quick Dick' in morning. Payed the men at both places.

July 12th

More bombs last night, rather disturbing as my billet is about as robust as a pack of cards. Dinner at No. 1 C.C.S. ; watching triplanes and others doing stunts.

1917

July 13th

Nothing much happening except bombs, etc. Lunch at Club. Nice to have a civilised meal.

July 14th

No. 1 C.C.S. and others moved out of town; also II Anzac H.Q. Too much noise I expect.

July 15th

Satchell returned from leave; dinner with him at Club. Orders to close up D.R.S. Only hold as many as can go into cellars. I remain; C.O., Hunter and Onley to L'Estrade.

July 16th

Bombs last night again; this is getting monotonous. Not too bad on my part. Things surviving very smoothly.

July 16th - 22nd

Same old round. Visit field Punishment Cage every morning (Col. Buick). Plenty bombs; these bright nights are a curse. Can't get out too much. Yvonne at the shop teaching me some French.

July 23rd

Made up a party and went to "Cooees", quite a good show. Last night No. 2 C.C.S. bombed and many killed and wounded. Cox J.C. blown to bits.

July 24th

Am to get Paris leave in about a fortnight; better than nothing. The Ambulance has removed from L'Estrade to Ravelsberg.

July 25th

Returned to Ravelsberg. Pay Day. Met Frank Craig at No. 2 C.C.S. Pretty spot here with sweet peas and sunflowers abloom. Grass and trees wonderfully green.

July 26th

Country is now glorious with the yellow fields of ripening wheat and oats broken by bands of green beans and potatoes. This hill country is a welcome change after the months on the plains. Every inch intensely cultivated and showing amazing fertility. Ravelsberg Rest Station is a home from home and everything is delightful, only 'Quick Dick' and bombs are vile. Heavy bombardment going on.

July 27th

Went to La Motte to pay our men there. Vickers very contented with things in general. Back through Hazebrouck, Caestre, Fletre, Matereu and Bailleul. 1st Anzac up in this area. Armentieres getting heavily shelled.

July 28th

A perfect day, spent largely in deck chair enjoying sun on our lawn. Shaved off my moustache. Quiet day.

1917

July 29th

Very heavy thunderstorm and much rain.

July 30th

Cloudy. Heavy bombardment going on up Ypres way. Big stunt coming on. 'Quick Dick' shelled our railway line. A and C section heavies went up line in afternoon.

July 31st

Intense bombardment last night. Stunt started at 2.30am. Quite successful. N.Z. took La Basse Ville and 3rd Div. advanced near Messines. Pilkem Ridge north of Ypres taken, and advances right up to coast at Nieuport.

August 1st

Heavy rain will hold up stunt. Bad luck. Counter attacks by Huns unsuccessful. Hazebrouck shelled.

August 2nd

Up early, raining heavily. C.O. and I with Gunning of Pioneers left by car at 8.30am. Through Bailleul, Outersteene, Vieux Berquin to La Motte to see Vickers. Then via Hazebrouck, Cassel, Arques to St. Omer. Down through Lumbres, beautiful hilly country to Boulogne. Reached there about 1 o'clock. Boulogne very steep hills. Old walled fortress on summit; top of walls about 60ft wide. Very old citadel, capitol or inner keep with a portcullis, moat, embrasures, etc. Cathedral quite fine, with an enormous dome. Dock or harbour very complete. Deep shingle bathing place. Officers Club full so booked rooms at Hotel Louvre. In afternoon went out to No. 2 A.G.H. at Wimereux, met Gen. Howse and others. Returned to town and saw Capitol, cathedral, etc. Club in evening.

August 3rd

Up early and caught train at 7.26am for Paris. British and Canadian officers in carriage. Still raining. Via Etaples and Abbeville to Amiens for lunch. From Etaples to Abbeville run along River Somme. Stations passed en route to Paris include Claremont, Caeil and Chantilly. Reached Gare du Nord about 4.30pm. Gare du Nord just off Rue La Fayette in Montmartre district. Taxi to Hotel de la Grande Bretagne, 14 Rue Caumartin just off Boul. de la Madeleine. Very nice comfortable place.

August 4th

Along Rue La Fayette to Gare du Nord to meet Vickery and after to A.P.M. near Place Vendome. In afternoon visited Louvre and Notre Dame, then by train past Bastille along Seine to Charenton and Creteil, through city walls and past Pont Alfortville. Just where the Marne runs into the Seine. Famous aviator Guynemer (50 Huns) was at dinner. After dinner visited Folies Bergere.

August 5th

Sunday. Still rather rainy. Lunch with Vickery at Duval's and then by train from Louvre through Sevres to Versailles. Sevrean fete in progress. The palace and gardens etc cost about 40,000,000 Pounds. Magnificent avenues, lawns, lakes and fountains. In evening to Olympia with Kelly. Met Col. Downey and Dunstan.

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August 6th

With Kelly to St. Cloud by train from Gare St. Lazaire. Lunch at St. Cloud, to city and then by taxi to Basilique Sacre Coeur, Montmartre. To Cafe de la Paix to watch people. By taxi to Bois de Boulogne, Longchamp, etc.

August 7th

Finer but still cloudy. Champs Elysees, Pont Alexandre III to Hotel des Invalides, war trophies and Napoleon's Tomb. Most fascinating to sit outside a cafe in one of the Boulevards and watch the play of colour and variety of the cosmopolitan crowd. Officers and men from all parts of the world; in all conceivable types of uniform. Frenchmen with scarlet breeches, gloves and fitting boots, blue coats and velvet caps heavy with gold braid. Russians, Serbians, Belgians, British, Americans, etc, even Tonkinese and Senegalese. Girls and women dress exquisitely. Boots or shoes perfect, short skirts and silk stockings. Dresses of every variety. Delightfully dressed hair and becoming hats. Most are done-up, but with skill and art. Walk daintily and have an air of infinite charm and seductiveness. The city is remarkably clean. The trees in the Boulevards give it an air of sheer beauty. In spite of the war, gaiety seems to prevail. Shops are wonderful. French officers are fine, manly, well-built and well-dressed men.

August 8th

To Vincennes and round town. Some shopping. Watched crowds in Boulevards. Bronchitis spoiling my dash.

August 9th

Visited Parc Monceau in morning. Pantheon and Botanical Gardens. Luxembourg in afternoon. Much rain.

August 10th

Vickery and I visited Park at Vincennes and rowed on lake, and round city to Bois de Boulogne; very beautiful lake. Alhambra Theatre in evening.

August 11th

Feeling particularly rotten this morning; cough fierce. Would rather be in bed than doing the town. Met Griffith etc at 'Petrograd' and after lunch went again to Bois de Boulogne and Longchamp. Leave ends tomorrow night (Sunday).

Places seen in Paris:-

Place Vendome, Louvre, Tuileries, Place de la Concorde, Place de la Bastille, Charenton, Bois de Vincennes, Sevres, Versailles, Saint-Cloud, Bois de Boulogne, Champs-Elysees, Pont Alexandre III, Basilique de Sacre Coeur, La Madeleine, Grand-Opera, Pantheon, Luxembourg, Notre Dame Cathedral, Jardin des Plantes, Parc Monceau, Arc de Triomphe.

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August 12th

Sunday. Last day. After lunch went with Griffiths and Maj. Churchus of Artillery to Napoleon's Tomb, then by river steamer from Place de la Concorde to St. Cloud and Suresnes. Walked across bridge landing beside Longchamp with its famous windmill. Drove past Cascade along Allee de Longchamp to Pavillon d'Armenonville for afternoon tea. Whole place very full of life. By taxi to Gare du Nord; train left at 11.40pm.

August 13th

Carriage fairly full through Chantilly, Creil and until Amiens; then only Vickery and self. Along Somme, reaching Abbeville about 7am. Etaples about 8.45 and Boulogne at 9.30am. Two long tunnels under town of Boulogne, then emerge by seashore, passing No. 2 A.G.H. and the old Lady Dudley Hosp., Wimereux. Enter mountainous country in region of Rinnest-Marquise with its extensive stone quarries. Reached Calais at 11.45am. Visited Old Town towards left on leaving station. Hotel Continental near docks for lunch; very good. Engaged a ghani in Grand Place and drove round both old and new portions. Intensely uninteresting and grimy. Couple of decent parks. Town Hall in process of building. Too hazy to see cliffs of Dover. Left at 1.20pm. Through open, rolling, well-wooded country to Saint Omer. Slow trip to Hazebrouck, Bailleul and Steenwerck. Ravensberg at 6.45pm.

August 14th

Find many changes. Macpherson acting C.O. Vickers to be D.A.D.M.S. Division vice Anderson who goes to Horseferry Rd. Lind to D.A.D.M.S. Corps vice Thompson, who gets an Ambulance. Bartram and Onley at La Motte, I expect to go tomorrow to shake off cough. Crops being harvested; seem abundant. 10th and 11th Brigade have gone out to rest; 4th Div. taken over. Gen. Jobson returning to Australia. Col. Maguire returned from England.

August 15th

Left for La Motte in morning. Cough troublesome. Onley and Bartram here also. Chateau fairly modern 1830, original castle 1060, rebuilt 13th cent. and present. Fine lake in front, part of original moat. Swans, fish. Fine trees; beech, chestnut, elms, oak, etc. Bombs at night.

August 16th

Vickers leaving. Went for a run in car with him to Morbecque. Tired set of terms but very weak. Have game of French billiards, no pockets. More bombs about 9.30pm. Searchlights and archies everywhere. Gothas of course.

August 17th

Rest, sunshine, peace. Few shells go over to Hazebrouck. About 40 officers here of all sorts. Glassford in charge.

August 18th - 20th

Much the same as before. Good lot of fellows. Much peace and quiet. Had dinner with McKillop and Rutledge at Jeanette's. Bombs around regularly.

1917

August 21st

Ambulance is moving out so Onley and I are to rejoin. Back to Ravelsberg before teatime.

August 22nd

Marched out at 8.30am to Steenwerck station. Beautiful clear day and one or two Taubes about. Mass of troop and several long trains at station; good work. Entrained comfortably and steamed out about 11 o'clock. Played Bridge. Did not stop at Bailleul or Strazeele. About 5 minutes at Hazebrouck, then through Ebbilinghen to Arques, just avoiding St. Omer. Reached Wizennes about 1.30pm. I went by car, up hill and down dale, to our billets at Wirquim Wirquim. Pretty little old-fashioned village down in a valley with a small river. C.O. and I in a Chateau with electric light and other comforts. Men in barns and outhouses. Narrow-gauge railway has station in village.

August 23rd

Everyone comfortable and happy. The river a great attraction. Went to Fauquembergues (Div. H.Q.) for pay, and on to Campagne les Boullonnaise (9th Brig. H.Q.) for letters. The garden of our Chateau very beautiful, plenty flowers, grapes in hothouses and pear trees creeping on walls.

August 24th

The rolling wheat-growing uplands are suggestive of Salisbury Plain. Very high, windy and fertile.

August 25th

A section and I move out today to exchange with 11th F. Amb. at Ecuire. Marched out just after lunch, about 5 miles (8 kilometres) mostly up hill against a gale. Hand reaping in full swing; sheaves being staked etc by old men and women. Ecuire a scattered farming village of about 20 houses. Officers live in large hunting box about 1 1/2 miles away, on edge of Bois Thiembronne. Game of seven and half and show poker with 11th.

August 26th

Rest of unit moved in and I took charge of hospital, sleeping in a tent on the premises. Pretty spot.

August 27th

Raining and blowing hard. In afternoon set out to pay our boys at La Motte. Through St. Martin, Fauquembergues, Therouanne, Aire (large town with fine old Cathedral), Steenbecque, Morbecque, Hazebrouck. Back to St. Omer for dinner. Walk round gardens (partly sunk) to hear band and visited Cathedral. Pleasant trip though wet.

August 28th

Blowing a gale; many trees blown down and broken. Had to abandon the tents and put patients in main building. I have breakfast in my tent and other two meals at officers quarters, big gloomy barn.

1917

August 29th

Continuous rain, wind and cold. Ground a quagmire; everybody most uncomfortable and grouchy. Hunter returned from leave by car from Boulogne. Am most fearfully fed-up.

August 30th

More rain and wind. My tent lets through a fine drizzle. Plenty wasps about to add to our joys. Wheat and oats crops rather spoilt by rain.

August 31st

Handed over hospital to Macpherson. returned to Le Val Restant. 9th Brigade sports in afternoon, abandoned owing to rain. Miller, Rowe and Cholmondley came back with us to afternoon tea. Brig. Rosenthal has got Jobson's job.

September 1st

Sunday. Slightly finer. Went for ride; most enjoyable.

September 2nd

Bright and sunny. Long ride in afternoon. Inspection of transport by Brig. Rosenthal. Walk to Happe after dinner. Bombs on neighbouring towns.

September 3rd

Transport route march; reviewed by Gen. Monash. Good turn out. Ride home through our forest. Leaves showing autumn tints. Bright moonlight good for bombs. called on Engineers and M.G.

September 4th

Nice fine day, warm and sunny; the wheat sheaves and fields of oats look fine. No men about, except aged.

September 5th

Postponed Brigade sports held in afternoon. Varsity dinner at Morbecque in evening. C.O., Taylor, Hunter and I. Picked up Massey at 33rd. Through Fauquembergues, Avioult, Clety, Therouanne, along upper water of Lys to Aire, thence by Steenbecque. About 60 sat down at long table in estaminet. Sir Alec MacCormick, Prof. Pollock, Moseley, Dud Oatley, etc. good food, drink and band. Most enjoyable. Reached home about 1am.

September 6th

To Boulogne with A.D.M.S. and C.O. via Senleques and Desvies (large pottery works). Went straight out to No.2 A.G.H. ; had a look round with Col. Powell and stayed to lunch. Col. Hurley and Yateman, Archdall, Culpin. Had a look round the old town and Cathedral. Vickers returned from leave; dinner at Lonvie. Met Cols. Macartney, Allsop, Playfair and Rowe. Few bombs on the town lately.

1917

September 7th

Rather dull day. Route march and bathe by M.G. billets and back through Thiembronne. Unit sports next Wednesday; great interest. Still plenty Portuguese round these parts; they are an interesting study. Hear we return to the line very soon.

September 8th

Still fine and sunny; the play of colour in the fields is fine. Went for a ride. Major Bobby Taylor has joined the show. Le Val Restant is to be used as an Officers' Rest Home. Bombs on St. Omer and Lumbres.

September 9th

Called out at Merck near Ouve Wirquim to pick up Playfair but they had left for the line. Major Austin (Dummy) Curtin joined us.

September 10th

Beautiful day. After lunch the C.O., Curtin and I went through Lumbres to St. Omer (lovely avenue of elms); then through Arques to Wardreques for afternoon tea with Brig. John Patten (6th Brigade). On through Aire and Therouanne to Erny St. Julian and dinner with 12th F. Amb. (Col. Wassell); back in dark through Fauquembergues.

September 11th

To 35th batt. as R.M.O. to relieve Metcalfe for ten days. A and B Coys. at Wismes; C and D at Dionville and Ecuire respectively. Wismes a pretty little village with very old church and fine water supply from spring. Maj. McDowell; Dixon, Amphlett, Icton, etc. Padre Osborne, Yates, Maj. McCann.

September 12th

Beautiful sunny day. Billeted in chateau; people are refugees from Lille. 9th F. Amb. sports in afternoon; good success. Bridge and seven and half in evening. Pierrot show.

September 13th

Battalion route march to Ouve Wirquim. Rode Bin. Good day. Battalion Officers dinner at Lumbres in evening. Travelled by motor lorry. Excellent dinner. All merry and bright.

September 14th

Nice day. Nothing special. Did some riding and bridge.

September 15th

Fine bright day. Ride on Bin to parade ground for inspection of Ambulances by Gen. Porter. In afternoon 2ns Anzac Horse Show. 35th batt. won Cookes; 34th 2nd for Limber. 11th F. Amb. 2nd for Ambulance waggon. British one magnificent. Jumping etc. Mule hurdle race funny. Sir Douglas Haig present. Bridge and seven and a half.

September 16th

Ride in morning. M'selle from chateau sings beautifully at church. Old mad woman at chateau. Bridge.

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September 17th

By lorries at 8am to Tardingham, through Desvies and Marquise. Walked to wissant in afternoon, saw Hun submarine wrecked on beach. Belgian cavalry training on sands. Cape Gris Nez just next door. Pierrots in evening.

September 18th

Rather too wet for swimming. McDowell and I by car in afternoon through Ableteile, Wimereux, Boulogne. Picked up Sister Hill at No. 1 A.G.H. ; friend of Casey, Bennett, Bartram.

September 19th

Ride among the farms. All cut by hand, mostly old men and women; very few machines needed. Tread-mill chaff cutter worked by horse rather ingenious. All the villages are well down in hollows to avoid winter winds. Mostly damp and unhealthy; heaps of T.B. among children, living in mud and slush.

September 20th

Cloudy and showery as usual. Batt stunt on field in front of Le Val Restant. Col. Goddard gone on leave.

September 21st

Decent day. Hear that 1st Anzacs are doing well at Polygon and Glencase Woods. The fields that crops are gathered from are fine for canter or gallop. Bridge and 7 1/2 in evening.

September 22nd

Saturday. Infirmary inspection of 3rd Division by Sir Douglas Haig. Fine sight. I watched the show. Major McDowell and I went to Lumbres for afternoon tea and dinner.

September 23rd

Another fair day. 35th played 9th F. Amb. at cricket. Heard that Metcalfe had injured knee and so I stop with 35th.

September 24th

Warm and sunny. Brigade stunt in front of Le Val Restant. At pow-wow, remarks by Brig. Rosenthal, Gens. Monash and Godley. Hear we are to move up in a couple of days. Busy getting everything ready for stunt.

September 25th

Warm and sunny. Last day at Wismes and we move out tomorrow. Feeling very fit after the 6 weeks rest in the country. Maj. McDowell got abscess tooth and epitrochlear gland.

1917

September 26th

Cloudy. Up at 5.15am. Marched out at 6.45am. Through Elines, Lumbres, Setques and Hallines (lunch at Estaminet) and through Wizennes, Blendeques to Bardringhem for the night; 16 miles with packs up; all the men got there alright. Whole Division and N.Z. Brig. Rosenthal congratulated 35th on their performance. Billeted at very big farm at Bardringhem; dinner at nearby Estaminet.

September 27th

Up at 4.30am; breakfast at 5.30; left at 6am. reached Ebbelinghem at 9am and had long hold up about one mile out. On by hedged lanes through cultivated fields. Padre Osborne and I lunched at old farmhouse on omelete, fish and about a quart of coffee and cream. Along by foot of Casell, through St. Marie Capelle and St. Sylvestre almost to Caestre, to Eecke. This is an old Flanders village; church with separate wooden campanile. Billeted in very big farm more than a mile out. Marched about 16 miles today; men rather tired.

September 28th

Marched out at 8am through Steenevorde to Winnezele; about 6 miles. Steenevorde big village, with church with high openwork steeple. In a farm house just beyond Winnezele. 9th F. Amb. in town. We move up to line tomorrow or day after. Very busy getting things ready.

September 29th

Final touches preparing for the line. Called on 9th F. Amb. Some of the special units moved up. Bright day and moonlight night.

September 30th

Sunday. sunny and warm. carry my gear in two haversacks; water bottle, gas-masks, blanket, greatcoat, rations - some pack-mule. Left at midday. Marched two miles to motor lorries - long column through Steenevorde, skirting Mont des Cats, by military road round Poperinghe, Brand Lock (transport lines) to Vlamertinghe where we disembarked. Roads absolutely packed with motor, horse and foot traffic, blocked every yard or two. Marched four miles to Ypres. Many bombs adjacent. Through ruins of Ypres, weird in moonlight, past remains of Cloth Hall and out by Menin Gate. Two miles out met by guides at Ruprecht Farm near Bavaria House. Ground absolutely ploughed with shell holes; dead horses and men everywhere - some smell. Reached R.A.P. at midnight. Old Hun dugout, Bremen House, used as Dressing Station. Strong but wet. Very tired. Some of our men wounded during night. Railway on right a tangled wreck. German remains and debris everywhere. Trenches on the hill. Constant fountains of dust where shells land.

October 1st

Still fine and sunny. Visited the local beauty-spots, alias shell-holes. 33rd and 35th H.Q. at Potsdam. Cockburn R.M.O. 36th at Bostin Farm. Mitchell Farm over the alleged road opposite us; all Pill-boxes i.e. reinforced concrete dug-outs. No work for us during day as Huns snipe the heavens. Busy at night. Three or four barrages during day; a few direct hits on our castle. Some bombs.

1917

October 2nd

Fine. Mailer R.M.O. 33rd joined us; quite full house. Young Callaghan killed. Bully and biscuits our feed; all brought us by pack-mules. Heavy shelling night and day by both sides. We move out tomorrow to make way for 11th Brigade H.Q. Working parties everywhere, some killed and wounded. Many direct hits by big stuff on our shack. Wandering about got splattered with mud and earth from shell explosions. Diarrhoea at night. Bean the correspondent dropped in with Padre Wilson.

October 3rd

Light rain. Brigade advance party already in. We moved out directly after lunch to improvised shelter behind a pill-box below Frost House. Just in front of line of guns. battalion stayed in till late at night and is somewhere near us on the hill. Our dug-out about 10 x 5 and six men in it. Corrugated iron roof and a few sand bags. Intense strafing all night; gas and H.E. Slept OK. Our Battalion S.B.'s who are five have brought in a number of tommies left out in shell-holes. An officer Lieut. Yuill brought in this morning with comp. fract. thigh had been out eight days with his

October 4th

Slight drizzle through night. Our barrage started at 6am and was ... for about 3hrs. Being just in front of the guns we had to plug our ears; ground shook and rocked. Guns wheel to wheel; all calibres. See the long line of flashes; and bursts. Hear they are going well. Huns prepared to counter attack against Zonnebeke and then barrage started at 5.30. Huns massing were mown down by our barrage. Streams of prisoners coming in, many on their own, helping to carry our wounded. Heavy shelling of all areas. Hun counter battery work erratic. Our fellows took Abraham Heights and the most important ridge at Broodseinde and dug in on the southern end of the Passchendaele spur. Good work. Counter attacks and heavy artillery work. Capt. Kerr and Cpl. Janus killed.

October 5th

Rained during night; our hole wet and uncomfortable; no sleep. Preparing to move when order arrived to pull out. Guns advancing and great activity. Hun balloons up overlooking us. Tremendous block of vehicles and ammunition on road up from Bavaria House. Called in at A.D.S. (Potijze Villa) and got lift to Menin Gate, Ypres. Marched to Vlamertinge and picked up lorries. Round Poperinghe, through Watou back to Winnezele. Cold and wet. Good billet with McDowell and Buntine. Sleep in real bed. Shave.

October 6th

Still wet and cold. All the heads very satisfied with the stunt. Well done Ossy. Busy reorganising and counting losses. Diarrhoea and piles still troublesome. Good dinner in evening and top-hole sleep. Col. Goddard and Maj. Blacklow back.

1917

October 7th

Sunday. Wet and cold. Men in tents pretty miserable. Brig. Rosenthal pleased with R.M.O.s We move to Mont des Cats in the morning; and then in again very soon. Interesting to read of battle as ones own view is very restricted. Rain at night. Padre returned, has been burying all the time. Getting ready to move off again. Letters from home.

October 8th

Wet and cold. Still in camp. Nothing special. Our move postponed.

October 9th

Final touches. Leave in morning. Windy and cold. Dinner at 7th F. Amb.

October 10th

Cold but reasonably fine. Busses at 2pm. Through Steenevorde, Abeele, round Poperinghe through Vlamertinghe to Ypres. Tremendous traffic. Debussed at dark and had to march a mile back, right through Ypres, out of Menin Gate to Carnby Farm near Hell Fire Corner off Menin Rd. The paddock a sea of mud and full of shell holes, most of which we sampled. Slept on sack, no blanket. Rained and fearfully cold; got into tent later. Frozen stiff. Shell-holes are for divers purposes; shelters, latrines, baths and refuse dumps.

October 11th

Cold wind but some sun. Shell-holes and mud not so conspicuous in daytime. Final touches all round. Left camp at 3pm with Padre; called at Potijze, then on to Bremen House. Road heavily shelled, many men and mules killed; lorries wrecked. Dump blown up by Bavaria House. Several artillery officers killed near Bremen. Left there with Myre, McDowell and Fry; shelling too heavy on road to attempt it; across by Potsdam to railway; followed tapes till they were broken. Pitch dark, lost our way, fell down shell holes and torn on barbed wire, wrongly directed, mud, shells, fatigue and misery. Nearly into no-man's land once, sniped. Reached Seine (Batt. H.Q.) about 4am and then along railway to R.A.P. Thames. Small and crowded, dead Boche in next room. Absolutely done. A few hours sleep.

October 12th

Wet and cold. Stunt started at 5.25am. Heavy barrage by both sides. Many casualties. Work in open under shell fire, often deliberate. Gother Clarke killed in his R.A.P. Cadell of A Coy. 35th killed. Snipers and machine guns very active. Prisoners mostly young and weedy. The fight is very difficult, made worse by mud. Am mud from head to foot. 34th and 35th Batts. obtained objectives. N.Z. on left got hung up, our fellows enfiladed had to retire. Our preliminary barrage feeble. Jumble conditions for our heavies and everyone else. Amphlett killed.

1917

October 13th

Saturday. Hail, heavy rains, gales and mud. Cases coming in in solid streams, nearly dead with wet, cold and exposure. Short of blankets and stretchers. Relieved by Guymer 43rd at 5pm. Down the line to Bremen House. Mud beyond all description; got bogged - helpless feeling. The line the only road of approach, a tangle of wreckage, littered with mangled corpses, dead mules and debris of every type. Shell holes everywhere. Zonnebeke Station unrecognisable. Reached Bremen at dark, shivering and done. No sleep.

October 14th

Sunday. Tried to locate Batt. in support, staggered through mud and down soupy shell-holes. Carried Bostin and Hill 40. Boche planes, bombs and shells. Returned to camp at Carnby Farm and then across to Potijze. Absolutely done, feet back and legs one huge ache. Slept at Prison, Ypres and never realised a cell could be so delightful.

October 15th

Left Prison about lunchtime and walked to Potijze and from there to Bavaria and Frost House with Vickers. The road lined with overturned lorries, waggon, tanks and other jetsam. Road on to Bremen heavily shelled; stopped there for night. Paddy Meehan had foot amputated; Dunstan shrap. Crook, Nankivell, Fox, Edser of 9th F. Amb. killed; good many wounded. General conditions during this stunt have probably been the worst ever experienced. Norbert Bridge turned up to replace Gother Clarke. Enemy planes very active yesterday and today, doing as they like; flying low machine-gunning roads and troops and dropping bombs on camps.

October 16th

Set out from Bremen at 6.30am across 'K' track and No. 5 track to Otto Farm; breakfast there. Walked across country to R.A.P. (Thames), heavily shelled marsh lands. Relieved Thompson who had been sent up in my place. Mailer 33rd at R.A.P. also. Things very willing in afternoon and all night. Ammunition and supplies of all sorts lying about everywhere. Trip over them. Bodies, clothes, accoutrements all over the place. Wastage enormous. Gas caused sore eyes, coughing and sneezing. Funk-hole has about 3 inches sat. soln. of dead Boche in it. Some stink.

October 17th

Fine and sunny; great aerial activity esp. Hun. Solid strafing by both sides. Cases coming in steadily. All wet, tired and fed up. The usual nightly visitations by H.E. and gas.

October 18th

To be relieved sometime today by British people, York and Lanes I think. More rain and mud. No drinking water for last couple of days; practically only bully beef and bread to eat. Shell hole water rather rank for domestic purposes. Mailer relieved at 4pm and got away comfortably. My man turned up at 8pm pitch dark. Tried to set out, got bogged and the biggest strife ever started and lasted all night; most appalling. H.E., mustard gas, phosgene and lachrymator alternately. Wet and cold, somewhat gassed, no sleep. The end of a perfect 8 days.

1917

October 19th

Left at 5.45am. Cold and foggy. Down the line; corpses and mangled remains everywhere. Last night's bombardment did some damage. They (Canadian engineers) are building new roads and duckwalks everywhere and about time too. Got lift in lorry at Bavaria in to Ypres. Cup of cocoa and biscuit at Y.M.C.A. at Ramparts. I have a long beard, black face, torn clothes and mud. My feet and legs practically refuse duty. Eight days lying in water, soaked to the skin is no joke. little sleep, cold food, work and strain. Reached camp at Vlamertinghe at 8.30 and done to the world. A wash, shave, change, breakfast and sleep made the outlook brighter. Sleep till morning. Bombs at night.

October 20th

Saturday. Foggy and muddy. Muster parade at 9.30. Sad sight the ragged remains of a gallant Battalion; so many sterling fellows left on the hellish ridge; for somebody's mistake another Balaklava. Col. Goddard addressed us and said it was recognised as the hardest and most hopeless job ever set men to do; and our fellows had been heroes. Padre and I to Poperinghe in afternoon, back in time for tea in darkness and bombs. Too cold to sleep.

October 21st

Up at 5am dark, cold and foggy. The two 'Archies' in the camp played a lively 'Reveille'. Set out about 8am close to Convent, Ypres. Waited there till 1 o'clock for busses bringing up Canuks. Hun shelling by Ypres Station with 'Quick Dick'; however our line of busses took that route as it was laid down; our lot scraped through unhurt; many Canuks knocked in busses; also a busy Dressing Station. The old London double-decker busses are marvels - still going strong. Round by Vlamertinghe, Poperinghe, Abeele, Steenevorde, Cassel, Arques, Wizennes, Ouve Wirquim to Dionville. Walked down to Wizennes, reaching home at 7.30pm. Cold and hungry. I'm billeting this time with Mac. People glad to see the few of us left, back once more. Wretched mustard-gas has got my eyes, throat and chest badly. A real warm bed once more is perfect luxury.

October 22nd

Wet and cold. Not much doing, sleep most of day. Cough very troublesome; no voice.

October 23rd

Wet. Autumn tints in woods beautiful. Everybody resting. Still hoarse and coughing.

October 24th

Finer. Mac and I rode to 9th F. Amb.

October 25th

Fine and cold. Capt. Thomas relieved me at 35th Batt.; sorry to leave, everyone most hospitable. The old madame at billets always ready with coffee etc. McDowell and I had lunch at F. Amb. and an afternoon by car to Boulogne with A.D.M.S., Curtin and Taylor. Out to No. 2 A.G.H.; saw Sister Hill, Col. Powell etc. Dinner at Metropole Hotel and stayed night there. Most enjoyable change after the Ypres front.

1917

October 26th

Slight drizzle. Did some shopping. Lunch in Old Town at Hotel Bourgogne where Scarlet pimpernel used to work out his plans. Called on Paddy Meehan and Dunstan at No. 7 Stationary; both fairly well. Left by car at 4pm. Appreciated the change immensely. I rejoined Ambulance.

October 27th

Cold and fine. My job to examine T.M. M.G. 1 Brig. H.Q. ; round in car; afternoon tea at Brigade (Campagne les Bourbonnais). T.M. at Mesnil Bontry; M.G. at Happe. Cough better. Col. Maguire went on leave to Paris yesterday.

October 28th

Sunny and cold. Lunch with M.G.

October 29th

Still cold. Scotch mist makes everything damp and sodden. Am billeted at Ansel's Farm on the Thiembronne Rd. Large room with huge wooden bed; opening off the kitchen-dining room. Great inglenook fireplace; small wooden fire on open hearth. Most of cooking done in cauldron suspended by pot-hook. Entirely primitive. They all work from 5.30am to 8.30pm, only stopping for meals. Most kind and attentive to me, apres les tranches. Coffee and cognac; baked pears; home-made bread, butter etc. Cough still troublesome at night.

October 30th

Cold and drizzling. I am O.O. for the week. Have progressed backwards in the Ambulance and no longer cut any ice, as there are three Majors. Good solid loaf and rest. Ecurie is not a bad little spot after all. Hear the Canadians are doing fairly well at Passchendaele. Italians getting it in the neck. Wonder if we shall be sent there to help. Major Smeal acting C.O. not too bad.

October 31st

Still leading the quiet life. Enjoy a read in the inglenook. Damp and cold.

November 1st

Some sort of Fete day for the French in honour of dead heroes I think. Busy doing T.B. inoculation. Lunch with Brig. Rosenthal and Maj. Wootten at H.Q. Brigadier's diary and paintings very interesting. Hear that Val Stacy is now Colonel and going to No. 2 C.C.S. vice Ramsay Webb. Satchell reported OK at No. 1 C.C.S. Outersteene. Bobby Taylor to go to England shortly. Am feeling fitter and cough is abating; this damp weather not much help.

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November 2nd

Wet and misty. Nothing special doing. We shall probably push forward somewhere soon although the men are by no means fit yet; all have coughs and will take time to recover from the doing they have had. Winter is almost here, and the red and golden leaves of the Bois and Forets are almost gone. Winter is a dismal thing without sun; constant rain mud and snow. This country is terribly damp and musty; even in summer the forests never really dry. My room is without a fire and smells like a morgue. Fortunately wood is plentiful and fires are possible. Coal is almost unobtainable.

November 3rd

Foggy mist; trees dripping moisture. Everybody got the hump and long for warm sun and Ossie. No ambish! Col. Downie of 11th F. Amb. has got A.D.M.S. job. Col. Chambers to 11th F. Amb.

November 4th

Usual November fog and dampness. Onley and I by car to Fauquembergues and Merck. Bridge in evening. I usually turn in about 8.30pm.

November 5th

Same old thing. More rumours about moving up to line somewhere. Major Wilson reported to replace Taylor who is going to England. Possible the Division may be split up to reinforce the others; no recruits from Australia.

November 6th

Rain and fog. A fierce country. Huns making tremendous push against Italy, will prolong the war. All our units still very much under strength. Feeling fairly fit now.

November 7th

Rain and hail. C.O. returns from Paris. Passchendaele taken by Canadians at last. We are to move to L'Estrade in couple of days; 9th Brigade going into line; Ploegsteert sector.

November 8th

Fine in morning; usual rain in afternoon and night. Getting ready to leave Ecurie tomorrow. Holding party of the 21st F. Amb. ; 7th Div. (British) arrived. Interpreter rather hard case; got French decorations for all his officers. My application for return refused by General Howse. Onley going to No. 1 A.G.H. Hunter has a job in London; C.O. also going. The old show broken up at last. Feel depressed. General Godley said goodbye to Officers as we are going into 1st Anzac.

November 9th

Fine in morning. Left by lorries at midday from Happe. Through Campagne les Boullonnaise, Fauquembergues, Clety, Wizennes, by the lower road to Arques, Renescule, Ebblinghem, Hazebrouck, Strazeele, and debussed at Vieux Berquin. Marched 9 kilometres to Donlieu in the rain and dark. Last June Donlieu was a warm, sunny place of ripe fruit and corn. Now mud and desolation. Back in same old farms. Terribly hungry; good dinner, good bed and good sleep.

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November 10th

Rain and fog. The guns are busy up north, evidently another attack near Ypres. Slept in late as everybody tired. Unfortunate news this morning about Russia and Italy; our secondary allies are letting us down badly; wonder how much the Americans will count? Poor old Joe Clonan dead.

November 11th

Left Donlieu at midday with Curtin and A Section marched to Pont D'Achelles. Looking very well; lawns green and tidy; huts painted. The fruits of our earlier labours. Took over from 25th Amb. (T) 8th Division. Game of ping-pong in evening. Very hospitable.

November 12th

Busy settling down and adjusting things. Rest of Ambulance arrived about 4pm. John Hunter to go to London and do biological work with Mawson. Beautiful clear crisp day.

November 13th

Clear and crisp. Busy tidying up. Samson to lunch. 3rd Div. coming into the line. C.O. and I went to dinner with Playfair at Oostove farm. Told me Frank Seale killed in September at Dickebusch. Geoff McLaughlin killed at Zonnebeke. Very muddy walk, back through Pont de Nieppe; foggy.

November 14th

Still cold and foggy. Men seem happy and at home here. Lind called, looking fit. Things fairly quiet.

November 15th

Bright day. All quiet except for guns up north. Haven't been out. Content here.

November 16th

Curtin to A.D.M.S. office while Vickers goes on leave. I'm down for Blighty leave on 30th inst. Starting Entertainment Club for Unit.

November 17th

Things still going wrong in Russia and Italy; looks like another two years of war. We still hold Passchendaele. Called in at Steenwerck.

November 18th

Sunday. Cold and dull. We are building bomb-proof ramps around huts. Place in fine shape now. Brissenden and Cutler (Intelligence) to afternoon tea. Dinner with 8th F.A.B. at English Farm beyond Romarin. Col. Allsop, Griffiths, Solling, Brake. Building bath house here with help of Engineers. Harding very decent. 'Toc' Williams now C.R.E. Letter from Anderson A.D.M.S., A.I.F. inviting me to call when in London. Vickery to go to Base Details, Havre.

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November 19th

Same old fog and cold. Cheerless sort of weather; we have lost enthusiasm of a year ago to some extent. The old show is a good deal altered and times and customs changed. Donovan has sailed for Australia; lucky dog. Wonder will they bring in conscription at home and reinforce us?

November 20th

Fine but foggy. Casualties slight but sick rate fairly high. I'm on Permanent Medical Board with Smeal. Entertainment Club started proceedings with '500' tournament; great success; hired piano from Bailleul.

November 21st

Getting the place in fine shape with whitewash and eyewash. A and B sections football match in the mud. Kelly (Sanitary) called. Appleyard got D.S.O. Some Bridge with Wilson, Bartram and Bennett. Hear of success with 450 tanks and Cavalry down at Cambrai.

November 22nd

Another dull grey day; typical November weather. Kelly to dinner, concert and Bridge. Onley leaving in few days to No. 3 A.G.H. Abbeville.

November 23rd

Decent day. Lunch at Butchery Steenwerck with McDowell. Left Lark Hill a year ago today. A good many changes since then. We are lucky to have lasted twelve months here.

November 24th

Cold and windy. Football match against 5th Field Amb. on grounds of 7th F. Amb. at Steenwerck, our first home. Afternoon tea with Col. Black and Maj. Mollison of 7th F. Amb. Dinner for men at 6pm tremendous success. We entertained Lind, Vickers, Satchell, Curtin and Love. Smoke concert followed, also very successful. I proposed toast of 'The land we love and absent friends'.

November 25th

Sunday. Clear and cold. Col. White, Col. Milne (36th Batt.), McDowell, Collins (Supply) and Buckland (Flying Corps) to dinner. 1st Anzac Pierrots (The Coves) gave concert in evening. Quite enjoyable. A successful anniversary; two days celebrations.

November 26th

Cold and dismal. A few first flakes of snow. Johnnie Hunter left for Southall No. 2 A.A.H. today. Maj. Lowrie has arrived to take Onley's place. I must make an effort to get a Base job now that all the originals are leaving. I must do some medical work and get in touch with recent advances. Hear that Bartram and Taylor are to be mentioned in dispatches. Collins R.M.O. 37th Batt. to get D.S.O. No others through yet. Anniversary dinner of 10th F. Amb. at Westhof. Good show; Kenny acting C.O. Their orchestra rather good. Young Glassford got M.C.; the two brothers have them now. Major Chaplin going to Abbeville, same as Onley.

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November 27th

Raining. No. 2 C.C.S. fellows going to give concert here tonight.

November 28th

Col. Chambers 11th F. Amb. and Col. Marks No. 3 C.C.S. and others to dinner. Onley leaving in morning by car.

November 29th

McDowell and I left at midday for Steenwerck station. Train at 1.30. Intended to go via Calais and Dover, but train did not stop. Hotel Metropole Boulogne.

November 30th

Boat left at 9am. Comfortable seats on windward side, rather disastrous when people get sick. Accompanied by destroyers. Plenty of boats about. Reached Folkestone at 11am. Lunch on train and reached Victoria at 1 o'clock. To Russell Hotel. Mac left Euston for Belfast at 8pm. I went to see the 'Better 'ole'.

December 1st

Lunch at Hatchetts in Piccadilly; old White Horse Cellars of coaching days.

December 2nd

Sunday. Breakfast in bed. Called on Mrs. Maguire in afternoon.

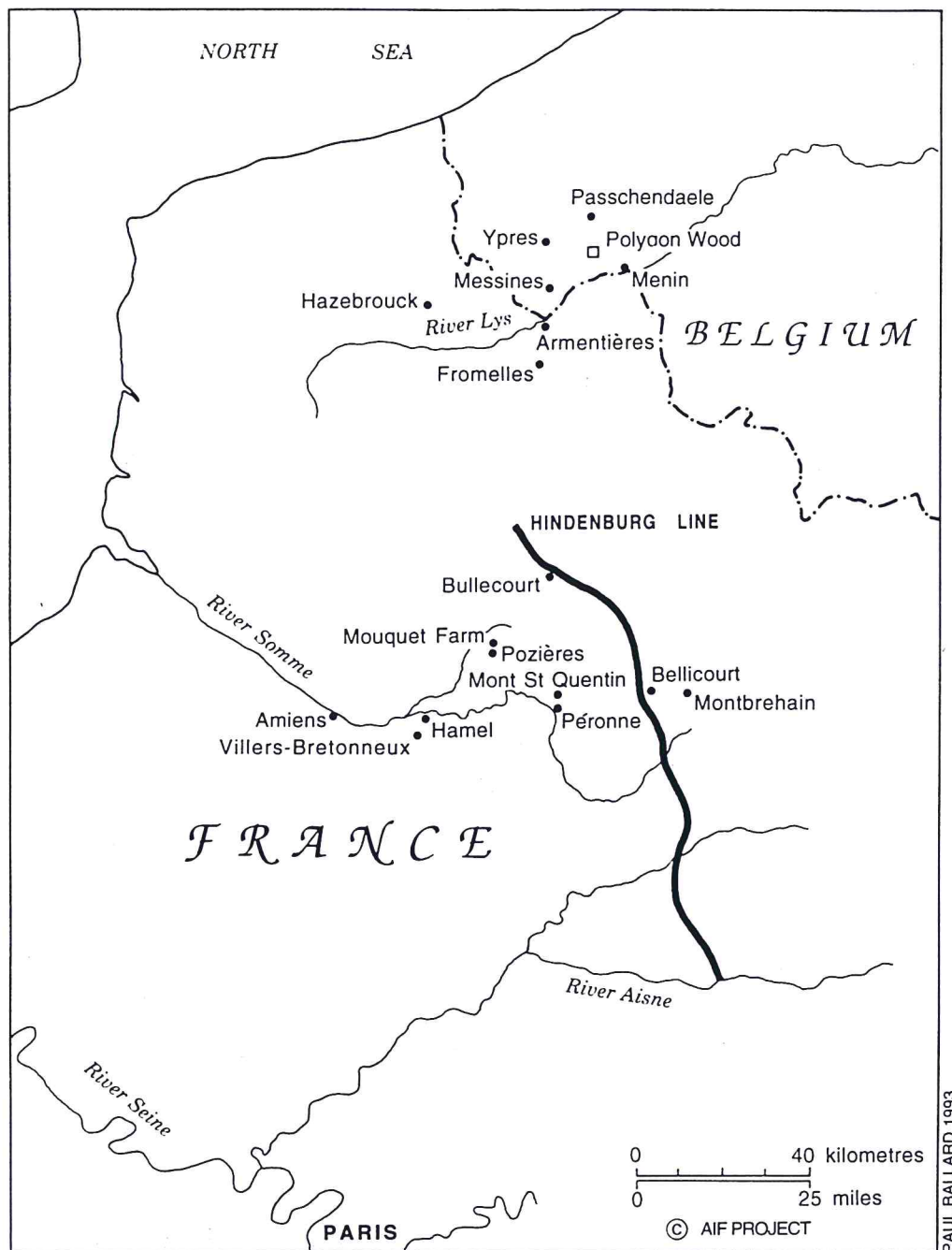
December 3rd

Lunch with Allison. Saw Jack Anderson at Horseferry Rd. Saw Paddy Meehan and Dunstan and wrote to Laddy Hill at Sutton Vevey. London not much altered. Plenty to eat, restaurants crowded. Usual extravagance. Heaps of guttural speaking foreigners and fit looking youths in civvy dress. Hardly know a war was on here except for prevalence of khaki. England will have to wake up a bit more yet.

End of the diary.

Nov 24th. Disembarked & gave men breakfast on wharf. Marched about four miles to Dock's Rest Camp, past acres of munitions & war material. Raining steadily at the Camp, which would all canvas. Had a cold shower, lunch at Officers Mess, then Unley & I went up town by train to see the Siles, returning about 6 pm. Too wet & dismal to be very enjoyable. The others spent the evening in town.

Nov 25th Left camp at 8.15 am. I marched through pouring rain to Gane Manatone, a goods station. Our train consisted of 50 flat trucks for wagons, cattle trucks for horses & men, & one dilapidated second class carriage for us.



The Western Front, 1916-1918