

Clarence Melvin Humphrys' Diaries July 1916 to August 1917



Clarence Melvin HUMPHRYS

Regimental number	2023
Place of birth	Redruth Burra, South Australia
School	Hanson Public School, South Australia
Religion	Methodist
Occupation	Farmer
Address	Hanson, South Australia
Marital status	Single
Age at embarkation	22
Next of kin	Father, Mr Elijah Thorn Humphrys, Hanson, South Australia
Enlistment date	15 February 1916
Rank on enlistment	Private
Unit name	<u>50th Battalion, 3rd Reinforcement</u>
AWM Embarkation Roll number	23/67/3
Embarkation details	Unit embarked from Adelaide, South Australia, on board HMAT A48 <i>Seang Bee</i> on 13 July 1916
Rank from Nominal Roll	Private
Unit from Nominal Roll	43rd Battalion
Fate	Died of disease 6 October 1917
Place of death or wounding	Warneton near Messines, Belgium
Age at death	24
Age at death from cemetery records	24
Place of burial	Boisguillaume Communal Cemetery Extension (Row B, Grave No. 26B), France
Panel number, Roll of Honour, Australian War Memorial	136
Miscellaneous information from cemetery records	Parents: Elijah and Mary HUMPHRYS, Maythorn, Hanson, South Australia

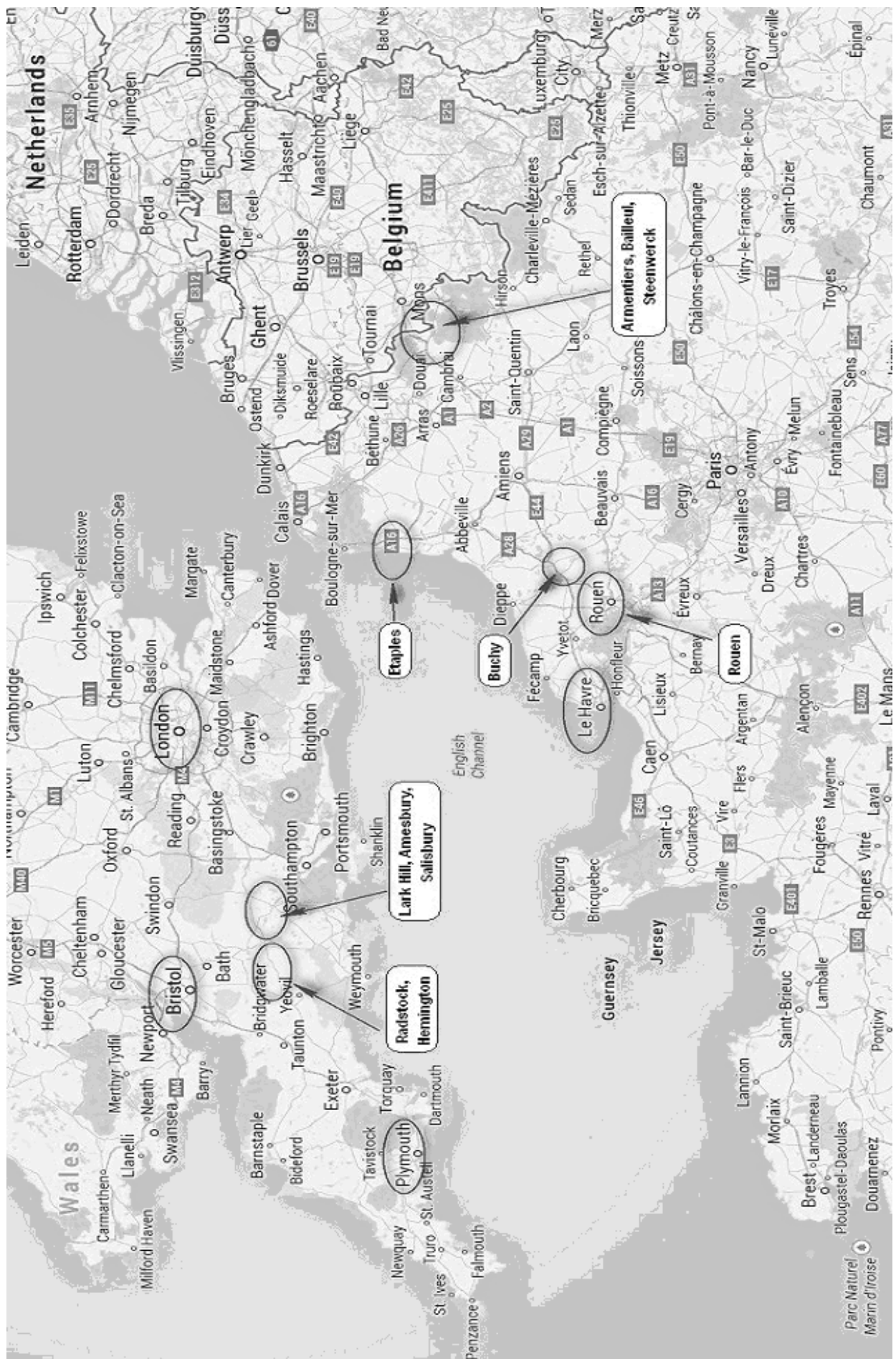
Description of <u>Clarence Melvin Humphrys</u> on Enlistment	
Age <u>22</u> years <u>4</u> months	DISTINCTIVE MARKS. <u>Vac. 3L.</u> <u>No R⁶ L⁶</u>
Height <u>5</u> feet <u>6</u> inches	
Weight <u>154</u> lbs.	
Chest Measurement <u>35.36½</u> inches	
Complexion <u>Med. Dark</u>	
Eyes <u>Light Brown</u>	
Hair <u>DK Brown</u>	
Religious Denomination <u>Methodist</u>	

Transcribed and edited by

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Contents of Clarence's Diaries

Chapter 1. Farewells and transport ship to Perth, then Cape Town Page 6

- 7 July 1916** Caught a train to **Farrell Flat** to say goodbyes to family at Hanson
13 July Train to **Outer Harbour** to board **Seang Bee** transport ship
18 July Reached **Fremantle** to load coal and WA troops
20 July **Seang Bee left** with about 600 more troops from W.A. bringing the number to about 1,100 troops.
20 – 31 July Ship's activities for the troops
8 Aug Tremendous **storm**, very violent gale which lashed the water to foam. Waves very high.
1 – 8 Aug Ship's activities for the troops
9 Aug Sea calmed down again. See the **coast of Africa** in the distance

Chapter 2 1916 Cape Town South Africa - Page 11

- 10 Aug** See **Table mountains** in distance. They look very rugged and grand. Shore. Interesting description of locals.
12 Aug Leave in Cape Town

Chapter 3 1916 Cape Town to Cape Verde Africa Page 13

- 13 Aug** Ship sails the Southern Atlantic
13 – 28 Aug Ship's activities for the troops
23 Aug Crossed the **equator**
27 Aug Saw some land. Part of some **small island** came in sight of **St Vincent** which is a Portuguese Island

Chapter 4 1916 Cape Verde, Africa to Plymouth England Page 17

- 28 – 30 Aug** Taking on water, coal and supplies. Interacting with natives.
31 – 8 Sept Left for England, on watch for Submarines, Troop activities

Chapter 5 1916 Arriving in Plymouth. Stationed at Salisbury Plains Page 20

- 9 Sept** Sight first bit of England before breakfast, **Plymouth** 3pm, Boarded train at 5pm, changing trains regularly
10 Sept Continued on until we got to a station past Salisbury, called Hansbury 5am
12 Aug 8am breakfast, then to **13th Training Base, Rolleston**, 6 miles from Amesbury
13 Sept First visit to **Stonehenge**
10 - 22 Sept Training continues at Rolleston

Chapter 6 1916 Transferred to 43rd Battalion at Lark Hill Page 28

- 23 Sept** Transferred to **43rd Battalion at Lark Hill**
24 Sept Longfellow (the poet) mentioned the "**Village Blacksmith**" and T.L.Fullers immortalised it in a photo of the "Smithy at **Figheidean**, Salisbury Plains"
30 Sept Saturday trip to **Lark Hill, Amesbury, Salisbury**

Chapter 7 1916 Training continues October Page 32

- 3 Oct** **Clarence's Diary Book 2 begins**
1 - 9 Oct Visit to **Durrington**, to **Dentist**, training on trenches, rifle ranges etc
10 Oct **Clarence's birthday**
10 – 14 Oct Rifle training, gas helmets. Visit village **Netheravon**
15 Oct Sunday walk to Amesbury and involved in Church activities
16 – 20 Oct Training on bombing, grenades, bayonets, trench attacks, long marches through farm country
20 October **Clement Humphrys's birthday**

- Chapter 8** 1916 On leave to London **Page 37**
- 23 - 26 Oct Train from Amesbury to Waterloo station, **St Paul's Cathedral, Tower of London**, Piccadilly and Leicester Squares, tube to Trafalgar Square, **Buckingham Place, Museum**. Train back to Amesbury
- Chapter 9** 1916 Training again after 4 days leave – **Page 39**
- 27- 30 Oct Marching, drill and fighting orders. New rifles, Bayonet practice, Sniper training
- Chapter 10** 1916 On weekend Leave Bristol, Radstock and Hemington **Page 42**
- 4 Nov **Lark Hill to Amesbury to Salisbury to Bristol**. JJ Humphrys, 45 City Rd Stokes Croft, Bristol. Family get together. **Clifton Suspension bridge**
- 5 Nov Train Bristol to **Radstock**, walk to **Hemington**. The Humphrys clan get together. **Cousins work at coal mines**. Walk back to Radstock. Multiple trains to Amesbury
- Chapter 11** 1916 Training continues after Leave in Bristol **Page 44**
- 6 - 24 Nov **Burial Detail** (near Tidworth Barracks). Trenches, bayonet exercises, gas helmets, the occasional evening Concerts. 3rd div 15 mile Route March. Map reading exercises
- 11 - 12 Nov Weekend leave. Train from **Amesbury to Salisbury** to visit ex Redruth Burra Minister. Sunday **Harry Humphrys** visits from London revisit **Figheidean "Village Smithy"**.
- 13 Nov **Clarence's Diary Book 3 begins**
- Chapter 12** 25 Nov 1916 – Leaving for France **Page 48**
- 25 Nov Marched to train to Amesbury, Train to Transport Ship, **sailed to France**.
- 26 Nov Disembarked at undisclosed location and marched to a camp of Bell tents
- 27 Nov Marched to station, Goods Train travelled overnight towards **Steenwerck**.
- 28 Nov Steenwerck at 4pm. Loaded kit from train to lorries, then to tent camp
- 29 Nov Explored French village with cobbled streets and many **Estaminets**
- Chapter 13** 1916 Labouring near Steenwerck France **Page 50**
- 30 - 8 Dec Training and familiarisation of the area.
- 9 - 23 Dec Moved to near **Steenwerck** and allocated labouring at a Stable Yard.
- Chapter 14** 1917 Moved to Front Lines near Armentieres France **Page 52**
- 23 Dec Training and familiarisation of the area
- 9 - 23 Dec Moved to near Steenwerck and allocated **labouring at a Stable Yard**
- 24 Dec Allocated fatigue work (labouring) behind trenches
- 25 Dec **Xmas day** but working in trenches in gum boots, saw **first dead soldier**, but went to cinema that evening
- 26 - 31 Dec Description of front eg trenches, canal, farm lands
- 1 - 21 Jan Witnessed air dogfights, **German mortars** (Minnies). Fatigue work (maintaining trenches), helping cooks, and acting as "runner". Snow and fatigue duties, Route Marches, Physical exercises, bayonet exercises, bombing practice, **weather extremely cold**
- 29 Jan **Clarence's Diary Book 4 begins**
- 31 Jan **Stretcher bearer** bandaged head, walked to the hospital for **2 stitches**
- 3 - 8 Feb Relieving the Front Line, on fatigue work maintaining trenches
- 9 Feb Back to billets, concerts, rest
- 13 Feb **12 months since Clarence enlisted**
- 14 – 18 Feb Training, revolver practice, bombing practice, but cinema in evening
- 22 Feb–10Mar Went to **hospital for sprained ankle**. Had it plastered. Signed off March
- Chapter 15** 1917 Raiding party 19 February **Page 64**
- 19 – 28 Feb Clarence's detailed accounts of Trench warfare in France
- 24 Feb **Divisional Rest station for sprained ankle**
- 1 – 15 Mar Clarence's detailed accounts of Trench Warfare in France

(The Diary for March to June missing!)

7 – 14 June Battle of Messines. For the official detailed description see <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/ypres-salient/battles-ypres-salient.htm>

Book 6 Clarence's Diary Book 6 June to 4 August 1917

Chapter 16 Volunteered for the Band, between serving in the trenches **Page 78**

15 June - 30 July Clarence's involvement in the band meant he was sidelined from the trenches, but was allocated fatigue duties (work not involving weapons)

Chapter 17 1917 31 July, the start of the Third battle of Ypres. **page 86**

31 July Third Battle of Ypres. For the official detailed description see <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/ypres-salient/battles-ypres-salient.htm>

31 July Clarence's involvement in the band meant he was sidelined from the Trenches, but was allocated fatigue duties, this time he was required to deliver wire to the trenches, which was still hazardous as still in the firing line.

31 July How he was "wounded" :- *In crossing over a patch of barbed wire I tripped over a short barbed wire stay and the top which is pointed caught in my boot laces breaking them and then went through the tongue of my boot into my foot midway between the ankles.*

1 – 4 Aug Conveyed by Red Cross Train from Bailleul to Etaples to Rouen. Even though not "wounded" his lacerated foot was bad enough to require hospital attention.

4 Aug is the last entry in Clarence's diary. The remaining 20 pages were not used, so it looks like his wounds took a turn for the worse. He died on 6th of Oct 1917 while at Buchy Convalescence Depot and was buried at Boisguillaume Communal Cemetery in Rouen France. Rouen is where his last entry in his diary was made.

Appendix 1 Jessica Bretherton's article, "Life in the Rear" **Pages 88 -98**
"Estaminets, billets, and the AIF on the Western Front, 1916-1918"

https://www.google.com.au/?qws_rd=ssl#q=jessica+bretherton+life+in+the+rear

HUMPHRYS, Clarence Melven	
	Service No 2023 Private 43rd Battalion
Born 10th October 1893 at Redruth, SA Son of Elijah Thorne HUMPHRYS & Mary nee TEDDY Died of wounds 6th October 1917 Aged 24 years Buried Boisguillaume Communal Cemetery Extension, Rouen France B 26	
	
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Chapter 1. Farewells and transport ship to Perth, then Cape Town

Commencing from the day I left camp to go on my long leave.

Friday 7 July 1916. Rose very early to catch train. Had to race for a car (*train carriage*) and put my "**puttees**" (*leggings wrapped spirally around lower leg*) on in the car. When I reached home went out with Maud(e) and Lily in the sulky with Clem and Rob's dinner. Gave all a surprise at home.

Saturday 8 July 1916

Given a **reception at Hanson** in the evening. Presented with a silver watch from Hanson friends and a gold medal from F.F.R.C. (*Farrell Flat Rifle Club*) Had a good time.

Went to Hanson church in the afternoon. Minister failed to keep appointment Sunday 9 July 1916 so Mr Motherall took it. After service went to bid farewell to Mrs James who had very recently lost husband by heart failure. In evening went to F.F (**Farrell Flat**) church. Received a pleasant surprise. Willie preached (*William Humphrys b1844 is Jesse's brother and was a Minister/farmer in Hamley Bridge*) and when the service was over Mr Samson the baker got up and spoke of my leaving for the front. He said that hearing that I was going to be present in the evening, they the congregation, had taken the opportunity to present a bible.

Monday 10 July 1916

Busy packing in the morning part packing my kit. In the afternoon rode motor round to Aunt Sarah's (*Aunt Sarah Teddy? or Sarah Anne Duke Humphrys?*) to say goodbye and from there rode with Clem and Maud(e) in hooded trap to Hanson. Lily Bishop gave me a parcel containing a fine balaclava cap and a purse and silver cross from her mother. A fair number were there to bid me farewell. Several pairs of socks were also given me. When train passed our homestead I had one long look and fixed it well in my memory. Rob was waving busily and the cows were lying in the paddock by the house. I said **goodbye to C(lem) at Farrell Flat (R.S.)**. Nothing of importance occurred until we reached Adelaide. Went to Mrs Atkinson's. Nellie sowed tapes on my socks, stayed there that night.

Thursday 13 July 1916

Returned to camp, my troops were already on the march for **Mitcham station**. I joined them and Lieutenant Kay gave me my embarkation card. Boarded train, the whole of route was filled with enthusiastic people who cheered us as we sped along. The carriages were very crowded, I got in a compartment with Mr Goode who was in charge of some standbys. One of them expressed the hope that some of the troops would not turn up as he wanted to go badly. When we passed through **Port Adelaide** there was a vast crowd to give us a good send off. Sammy Lunn was there with messages and a cheer for the soldiers. We passed through and then on **to Outer Harbour**. Nell, May and Linda were already there and gave me **purple and blue ribbons to throw to them from the transport (Seang Bee)**. We all went below and put away kit bags and then rushed for top deck. I scrambled on an out house as I couldn't see anything from below. Nell & Linda soon spotted me and I threw them my ribbons. Mrs Smart appeared a short time after having caught a later train. Sammy Lunn was busily calling for cheers from the crowd and from the soldiers for those left behind. He had no difficulty in getting it from either. Mrs Smart had given me a red, white and blue ribbon to hold. At length the ship started and we slowly drew away from the shore. I kept the ribbons as a token of the friendship of the Adelaide friends.

Friday 14 July 1916

Weather a trifle rough (**sailing to Fremantle**), Ted Williams and I were lying up by the bow and a wave came over, passed right above us and wetted a number of other lads. I felt a bit sea sick so ran to the centre of the ship and lay down. It passed away. I forgot to mention that Linda gave me a half penny for luck, and I gave her the penny bit yesterday. (SS?) Mongolia passed us today.

Saturday 15 July 1916

Saw a live whale for the first time in my life. It did not stay up very long. I was put on fatigue sweeping the deck. We were all issued with life belts. Having a little rain and haven't missed a meal.

Sunday 16 July 1916

I was asked to **play for C of E service**, the organ was a very small affair which packed up like a post. When I was going to have a wash the ship gave a roll and as she had, shipped, a good deal of water, I got everything wet and had to change clothes.

Monday 17 July 1916

Saw land for the first time after 4 days, nearing Fremantle.

Tuesday 18 July 1916

Pulled into Fremantle, All troops had to stay on board until permission was given from the West Australian officials. Some of the lad's friends came near in launches. Coal barges were pulled alongside and **coaling** commenced. **Dagoes** etc sold oranges to soldiers and **lumpers** put the hook in handle of one basket and gave sign to winchman to haul away. The lad hung on and was hauled up about 10 feet. He dropped down and all his oranges were tipped out. The lumpers threw all the **oranges** onboard. Some of the lads threw dagoes some money. In the evening some of the lads tried to stop lumpers from coaling? to show their disapproval of being kept on board, but soon relinquished it.



A48 SEANG BEE

5,849 gross tons. Lb: metres. Owned by the Lim Chin Tsong, Rangoon, and leased by the Commonwealth until 12 May 1917. departed Sydney 11 February 1915. 11 February 1915 at Sydney embarked 1st Infantry Battalion (New South Wales) 2nd

Reinforcements, 2nd Infantry Battalion (New South Wales) 1st Infantry Brigade 2nd Reinforcements, 3rd Infantry Battalion (New South Wales) 1st Infantry Brigade 2nd reinforcements & Medical Officers. 13 July 1916 Medical Officers at Adelaide. 10 February 1917 Medical Officers at Adelaide.

Wednesday 19 July 1916

Taken ashore in the morning for a short route march through town of Fremantle. In the afternoon we were all let go. I **caught a train for Perth**. Just out of Perth I saw a man's house which he had built on the (*River*) Swan to dodge paying rates. Perth has narrow streets and funny little electric cars.

Garden is very small but there are nice buildings. Several of our chaps indulged too well but not wisely.

Thursday 20 July 1916

Seang Bee left about 8 o'clock with about 600 more troops from W.A. bringing the number up to about 1,100 troops. The sea was very rough, it turned up a lot of W.A. troops. Stow-a-ways were found in one of the boats and were taken to the captain.

Friday 21 July 1916

Sea still very rough, troops issued with about 2 lbs of apples per man. W.A. troops very sick. Soldiers had to search coolies quarters and found quantity of whisky and some soldiers property.

Saturday 22 July 1916

Had a punch at punch ball but hit atmosphere. 2 ships lights were seen during night.

Sunday 23 July 1916

Attended C of E service in officers quarters. Sea very rough. Knocked in hatch – Colonel Limtox put on life-belt and rushed for deck. under the impression that we're sinking. Very rough night.

Monday 24 July 1916

Still very rough wave break over ship. Bringing food from cook house. Slipped on **stewed apples spilled** by an orderly. Sat down and nearly all of own stewed fruit shot over self. Had a shave and left moustache on. Rather feeble affair. Aus? eleven.

Tuesday 25 July 1916

Calm sea. One engine idle for part of morning. Rain. Pioneers skylarking. Throwing each other about on deck. 3/50th give **concert in the evening**. The first 3 items had to be off as music mysteriously disappeared. Chief Officer (*Ships*) gave a fine recitation.

Wednesday 26 July 1916

Sea smooth as glass. Mr Riley saw school **of flying fish**. Lecture from C.C. Appeal to play the game for the sake of loved ones. Argument between two of our lads which led to blows with gloves after which they were friends again. Feeling sick of a sailors life now.

Thursday 27 July 1916

Solly asked me if I would like to learn signalling. I fell in with the idea, as it may prove very handy. Have first lesson. Have a feed of pineapple to start with. The soldiers give the stowaways drinks of cordial. The W.A. units have 2 bag pipes with which they regaled themselves and others with in the evening. Sounds a long way off.

Friday 28 July 1916

Aus? day and washing day. Had a light box with Bowman. Turned thumb back. Scenery getting monotonous.

Saturday 29 July 1916

Rough and rainy. Another try at signalling. Concert in the evening by sergeants and corporals which was very good. Printed programs. Sergeant Chamberland had difficulty in retaining his balance. By reason of rough sea and some other cause suspected. One corporal played very well on violin.

Sunday 30 July 1916

Attended C of E service. Started to read John Ward.

Monday 31 July 1916

Had physical jerks . Started to learn morse code. War news on wireless from Perth. Kirkland tells me that Tom Bailey (*survived*) is on board from Jamestown. Bag pipes again.

Tuesday 1 August 1916

Coolies Xmas. They had prayers and read from their Koran. After service they all embraced right round in a very serious way. This part amused the soldiers who were emulating them. After this they marched around the decks in their fine raiment. They did not work. Another issue of apples. **Whale sighted.** 7 or 8 messes had some loud meat for dinner. They secured the bugler and they marched back to the cook house while the bugler played the dead march. It was very amusing to the lads.

Wednesday 2 August 1916

Try getting about without boots or socks. Write letters. **Flying fish** seen. Aired our rugs. **Paper called Seang Bee Sea Breezes** started on board by officers and sergeants. Port holes all opened to let fresh air in. Phenyl is sprinkled about to kill microbes which may come to light.

Thursday 3 August 1916

Flying fish flew on board during night. Coolies cooked it for breakfast. Wrote to Clem. Bread like dough. Mr Lackman inspected it and rolled some of it up in his hands and said there's nothing wrong with this bread and then bounced it on the floor. It bounced about 8 ft in the air.

Friday 4 August 1916

Pay day. We get paid every 10 days on voyage. **1/- a day.** I find that number in the pay book is different to number on bags, dish etc. Mr L returns letter to mother as I hadn't affixed signature. Write to all friends telling of alteration in number.

Saturday 5 August 1916

Sports held on troop ship. Giving to limited deck space sports were held on either side of ship at once so items could be seen by most of the men. Light weight boxing was won by W.A. who fought very fairly. The most amusing incident of the day occurred when the **spar boxing** was on. The competitors sat astride a spar and belaboured each other with pillows until one of other fell to the mat beneath. 2 were on the spar to compete. These was a competition for officers as well as men. When their turn came the pillows were feeling very weak. 1 burst at the bottom. Instead of stopping as soon as the pillow burst, the officer continued to belt away until there was not a straw left in the bag. Everyone nearby was covered in straw, especially the officers who were standing nearby. Another pillow was handed to the officers and after a few smacks this too gave way. The same performance was again repeated with the exception that the pillows' innards was composed of flock instead of straw. By this time everyone was convulsed with mirth. My sides fairly ached. Yet another pillow was requisitioned and whether by accident of design, I'm sure I can't say, but this one proved weak as weak for it burst at a very few smacks. This time coconut fibre was disclosed to view. The crowd fairly roared with delight.

There was also **egg and spoon races.** These would have been a great slaughter in eggs if the officials, with great foresight, had not got in a supply of chicken eggs. **Potato races** were also held. The **apple eating** competition was enjoyed by competitors and onlookers. The winner was called Winner. He made 3 bites and had the apple down. I myself couldn't get so much as one bite, except by pushing it against another chap's head. The winner managed the prodigious bit by having his false teeth in his pocket. The rest of the sports put off on account of time.

Sunday 6 August 1916

More weather. A little diversion and cursed when ship gave a lurch causing Sergeant Major Dinning of 3/48th to lose his seat at the organ (music stool, on other occasions is a

rubbish box) and go for a quick run across the deck. Text somewhere in Exodus "And when they came to the place where ---- fell they all with one accord stopped". It was a service of remembrance of the lads who had fallen in battle.

Monday 7 August 1916

Sports postponed until further notice on account of rough weather. A paper was posted up giving distance from Cape Town and number of miles travelled every day since leaving W.A. The greatest number of miles covered in one day being nearly 200 miles. **We are 640 miles from Cape Town.**

Tuesday 8 August 1916

Tremendous storm which has grown since last night. Very violent gale which lashed the water to foam. Waves very high, a most impressive sight. Despite the high seas boat rode the waves well although many waves were shipped. **The force of a wave breaking over side is terrific.** One swept over the top deck and caught some sergeants and corporals who were seated or standing by orderly room. They were all swept off their feet and washed all over the place. It was very amusing for the onlookers but uncomfortable for the unwilling bathers. It made one the chaps nose bleed. About a ¼ hour later another wave broke over and deluged a lot more of the lads. A little while later I saw a huge wave approaching and remarked that it was a wonder we were able to ride them It would have been a wonder if we had but we didn't, for it came over and drenched me to the skin. The C.O. of the ship ordered all men below then, but we didn't stay down very long as the sight was too grand to miss. Some of the sickly inclined were once more prostrated by the wobble of the ship. Les McGown was feeling unwell again. He had previously lost his teeth overboard and was now managing without. The lads were busy taking photos of the waves as they broke in a cloud of foam. The sea looked as though it was burning by reason of the spray blown along by the wind. It looked like smoking. I was seated on the top deck on the starboard side and the niggers came around to lash the seats to prevent them from getting broken. I was sitting on some ventilators just behind and above the seats at the time. I had my overcoat on. A big wave burst over the side bowling over the coolies like nine pins. They got up and laughed and as I was splashed one said "You same as me". The engineers had their work cut out in the engine room as **the propeller often came right out of the water** which caused the engine to race. One wave broke over the bows which broke off 2 ventilators, broke iron railing and finally broke in a hatchway. Fortunately no-one was on the steps at the time, although a number had been standing there nearly all of the morning. A big cask of water was also washed through the 3/48 quarters. About 6 inches of water was washing about the lower deck. More men got drenched today than on all of the rest of the trip. About 4 miles an hour was registered for the day which was very good, considering the big sea. The **doors were knocked off the bakehouse** during the night. **500 loaves were spoiled** by the sea water. Great care had to be exercised climbing stairs.

Wednesday 9 August 1916

Sea calmed down again. **See the coast of Africa** in the distance. Presumed to be about 20 miles away. We follow coast line. See 3 ships and a **whale spouting**. I was going down for dinner when I encountered Harry Abbot. Knew him at once. Told me that he was in A.M.C. and that Greens were well. I had not encountered him before as he was on duty and I didn't think to ask for anyone of that name. Had a lecture from Mr Lackman, **asking us to behave like gentlemen on reaching Cape Town**. We were issued with small cabin biscuits on account of spoiled bread.

Chapter 2 Cape Town South Africa

Thursday 10 August 1916

See Table mountains in distance. They look very rugged and grand. The top of **Table Mountain** is apparently level dropping straight at either end. The **Lions Head** is a very steep mountain rising many feet above sea level. Before coming to a point it rises perpendicular about 40 ft. It is scaled by chains. The **coast line is very rugged**. In afternoon, after preliminaries of doctor etc we sail into port. The harbour has a very narrow opening and inside the sea is very calm. See a yacht which one of lads thinks to have belonged to Dutton. Draw alongside wharf to coal. No time lost in starting operation. **Kaffirs do nearly all manual labour in cape**. They are very much in the majority and the colour line is very pronounced about here. We were all **anxious to get ashore after 3 weeks of sea** life without touching a port. We were marched ashore and lined up in our respective units. There are six aboard and then the Lieutenant read out the orders from the heads ashore. It was to the effect that we would be restricted in our freedom ashore by reason of misbehaviour of previous troops who have landed here. Hotels were shut. The civilians had taken the matter up as well as the military, so we had to abide by it. We were **taken for a march through the town** which is situated about ½ mile from the docks. The streets are rather narrow. **The buildings are big and some are very artistic**. There are a good number of cars (*motor*) and they travel at a great pace in the streets. Electric cars are used for the town and service runs to **Camps Bay** which is around the other side of Lions Head mountain. The electric trams are nearly all 2 storied. The police men are fairly big men. We were all **marched back to ship towards evening and had tea on board**. All lads were cross about not having leave and during early part of the night a number got ashore. A lot more were kept back at the point of the bayonet. **Kaffirs coaling** and the noise was rather disturbing to slumberers.

Friday 11 August 1916

C.C. says we may **go ashore in groups** in company with N.C.O.s who would be held responsible for us. He asked for volunteers to act as pickets during the day ashore. 7 or 8 were required and I went for 1. The remainder went ashore under N.C.O.s in groups of about 14 men. Myself and the other pickets from the other units followed and went to the police station. Nearly **everything has 2 names for the benefit of the Dutch**, Police Kantoor is below Police Station. This was to be our headquarters. The W.A. troops had to go on picket first, so the S.A. troops went and had dinner. We were directed to a very nice restaurant where **we had as much as we could eat for 1/-**. At 1 o'clock we went back and relieved the W.A. pickets. Sergeant of Police and Mr D Lackman accompanied us on the round. We had to patrol the quarters where the soldiers were not allowed to go. A crowd of Kaffir children running alongside. When we passed another policeman he rushed out and kicked one well and truly where his mother spansks him We had no trouble and returned to the Police Station. Pedlar informed me that one of our chaps had wanted to go on the picket so looked him up and he went on in my place. It came to rain then and prevented me from going **to Camps Bay where a reception was being given for our lads**. I put in my time looking around town. I visited the tourists bureau and wrote a few letters. I bought a book of views and sent home from the Post Office. I was not allowed to cable. Picked up Corporate Burchells pay book. Went around and saw the Secretary South Africa Temperance Union who showed me a very **fine collection of curios, heads of horned animals from different parts of the world**. He had a pair of bullock horns which was about 7 ft from tip to tip. He had a fine moose head, a spring bok, which is the emblem of South Africa troops and a variety of snake skins. He has a very nice wife who is very deaf and has to have an ear trumpet. They showed me some books written by their son who was commissioner for some part of the Africa before war started. He

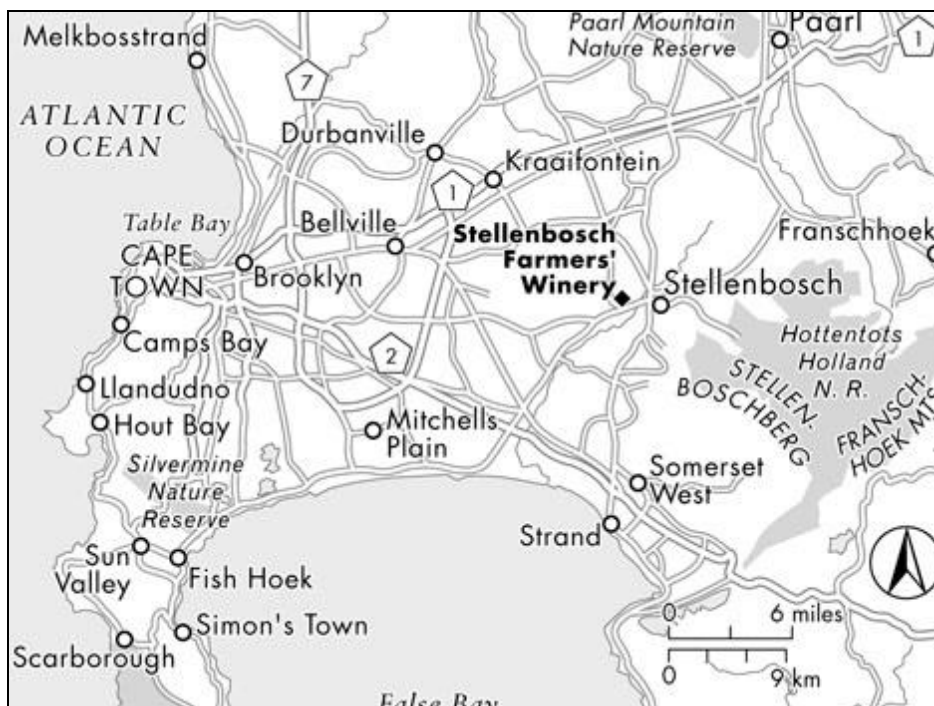
afterwards went to France. They gave me his unit's address etc. I spent a very enjoyable evening and hope to meet them again. Returned to ship.

Things are fairly dear in Cape Town. Good chocolates are over 2/- pound, apples 1d each. Oranges are the same but are very good size and flavour. There are electric cranes in use on the wharves of which they have a large number. **A great number of the lads returned to the ship without cash** as they all wanted to have a good time. We were all thoroughly tired and wanted to have a sleep.

Saturday 12 August 1916

No one allowed to go ashore in the morning as we were supposed to sail at 1 in afternoon. Our C.C. told us to be ready in case the order was changed. Our **departure was postponed until evening, so the troops were allowed off** in the afternoon with strict orders to be back at 5 without fail. I seized the opportunity to take a **trip to Camps Bay** in the electric car. It is about 4 miles there. It was a very pretty run. The tracks run right around the side of a hill. The road for ordinary traffic is about 100 feet below and comes to the same point at Camps Bay. **Camps Bay is fixed up as a pleasure resort and watering place.** The electric power station is there also in which there are very large engines.

The celebrated **silver leaf** grows on the sides of the Table Top and Lions Head. On the return journey I got out of the car and walked up side of Lions Head and picked some silver leaves. I then returned to Cape Town. Rain started to descend so I started for the docks. I got in soon after 5 o'clock. There were very few on board and a picket was sent out to look up the refractory soldiers, I was not sent on that expedition. The lads had got hold of a rumour that the ship was not leaving until ½ past 6 the boat left her mooring and went a little out and anchored. Troops were brought on board by a tug which towed an empty coal barge with the troops on board. **The Troop Ship left her mooring again with about 50 missing.** A lot more of the troops turned up subsequently and the tug took them aboard and set after us, catching us about 10 miles off. The **sea was very high and great difficulty was experienced in transferring the troops to the troop ship.** The lads had to grasp a rope ladder when the tug was high on a wave and hang on for dear life, for the next moment the tug would be down in the hollow. All got on safely. About **25 men were left behind at Cape Town** and will be brought on by the Ballarat.



Chapter 3 Cape Town to Cape Verde Africa

Sunday 13 August 1916

Well under way. Heavy seas again, Rough weather every Sunday so far. C of E service. Text "Ye are not your own". Chaplin had some difficulty in retaining his balance. Bully beef for tea. Nice change.

Monday 14 August 1916

Some of chaps **fined for breaking leave** at Cape. 2 were docked 2 days pay and 1 had 28 days to work instead. Had a shave and did some washing. Weather getting warmer. Still heading north. Bought 2 postcards of Seang Bee. Went and looked at 12 pounder which is mounted on stern of the ship. Received permission from 1st engineer and went below and **inspected the ship's engines**. It's a very large affair and runs very smoothly. The ship uses her steam over and over again. The steam is condensed and returns to engine at about 160°. The **electric dynamo** is also there for generating electricity to light the ship. The engines use on an average of 70 tons of coal a day and generates between 3-4000 horse power. Everything is kept neat and clean. The temperature was about 95° in the engine room. The boilers were in another deck on the same level. There is 1st 2nd and 3rd engineers on board. The 3rd engineer said they had a hard task to mind the engine on the day of the storm to keep the engine from racing when the propeller rose right out of the water. The ship is doing full speed but there is a reserve of power which is not used unless necessary. Returned to top deck and did some signalling.

Tuesday 15 August 1916

Fine day. Did some more washing. Weather warm. Pressed some silver leaves.

Wednesday 16 August 1916

Bought our much talked of paper Seang Bee Sea Breezes. **Sports resumed** as the weather is everything to be desired. On this occasion **skipping, sack races, cock fights** etc were the items on the programme. Sack race was very amusing as nearly every competitor came into violent contact with the deck. Taylor of our unit came 2nd. The officers had a turn also and was won by W.A. Lieutenant Long, standing jump was well fought for, winner doing 9 ft. Skipping was limited to 5 minutes and was won by a W.A. who skipped over 700. The **cock fighters had to sit in a circle with their hands tied** across their knees and a piece of broom handle through their legs. They had to roll the other out of the ring. This event was won by Gascott of our unit. Sea so smooth that ship feels as though anchored. Gunner had a shot at kerosene case from stern of ship. Hit it at 2nd shot.

Thursday 17 August 1916

Officers put in **a bit of practice rifle shooting** at kerosene cases. Had a game of draughts.

Friday 18 August 1916

Weather a trifle cooler. **Went on sick parade for a slight cold**. Got medicine to take every 4 hours. Shaved a young chap who gave me a fine fat orange as a reward for honest labour. Had physical jerks which kept me from going too stale. This evening did some skipping. Managed to do 2 turns of the rope to 1 jump. Did some mending. I sewed on a button or 2.

Saturday 19 August 1916

One of the soldiers caught with more property than belonged to him. Kinked for taking things too easily. Had some more skipping and signalling.

Sunday 20 August 1916

A fine day. Saw a number of flying fish. They look like swallows flying along the surface of the water. In afternoon the canteen was opened and Mr Riley bought some biscuits which Rowe, Nicholls and (James) Murchland, he and myself consumed. We had speculated in something different and had a good time, I suggested that we should have a discussion in the form of a **debate**. I chose as a subject "Is it a Christian like act to wage war against man as we are about to do". Mr Riley answered with good effect stating that we were doing the work of a Christian in that we are going to defend the weak against the strong. He went further to say that even though we were fighting to uphold our pledge, he felt sure that Belgium was suffering for the deeds which she had done in the past, namely the acts of cruelty perpetrated on the blacks of Congo, of which we have had sufficient evidence to be quite agreed upon. And also that we are told to obey the laws of our country and when we obey the voice of conscience we must go out to try and cope with this disease which has spread so far over Europe, namely Germany. After which we had some singing which we ourselves enjoyed and did not harm anyone else so we were alright. Attended C of E service in the morning which was held on top deck on the port side. Gave the lungs a bit of stretch on the top notes. The Chaplain chose for his text "For my grace is sufficient for thee". He spoke well but not to any length as I suppose he thought he might bore his listeners. The whole service lasting a little over ½ hour. Previous to the service we had a boat drill. The bell was rung continuously and the bugle sounded. Everyone made a rush for his life belt which is stored in racks below on the deck that we eat. There was not very much confusion and everyone was soon at his allotted boat or raft. I have been allotted to the same boat as the Captain has to go in. There is one amusing incident recorded in our Seang Bee Sea Breezes of one Tommy who thought the alarm was genuine and who grabbed a lot of his clothes as well and started for the boats. In the evening the Y.M.C.A. organ was taken on top deck and a sing song was generally joined in by all present, Mr Hunt representative of the W.A. Y.M.C.A. gave away some neat little testaments to the soldiers. Last night the soldiers were given permission to sleep on deck as sleeping on lower deck was getting too stuffy as we are very near the equator.

Monday 21 August 1916

Sun rose as red as fire but with no cloud effects as there seemed to be a mist. Jolly gave me a tin of dripping which I presented to the mess. I told them it was to commemorate the **crossing of the line** which we expect to do today. Some suggest drying their washing on it. **I was put on canteen fatigue** and I had to help **carry the bottles of cool drinks up 3 flights of steps** to the canteen. Had another discussion with Murchland and Nicholls and then attended a **concert** give by 18.16 assisted by the quartet party. The first item was an overture by Colonel Makeham on piano accompanied by Private Hoods. It was some kind of a jig and Hoods showed a skill in keeping pace with his violin. 2nd song "In old Madrid" by Private John. Good voice. 3rd "Queen of the Earth". Sergeant Major Dinning who has a full bass voice 4th "The Rosary" by the **Seang Bee Quartet** which was excellent. 5th Long "Death of Nelson. Private Trotter who was suffering from a cold but sang well. He was encored and obliged with "The anchors weighed". After which we had a presentation of prizes to the **winners of competitions at our sports**. The officer who received the banging with the weak pillows was chairman. He referred to the enjoyable time we had had on that day and mentioned that the item enjoyed most by everyone else, he enjoyed the least. I am not surprised at that. The prizes were given in cash as the officers could not get suitable presents at Cape Town. The prize money was presented by Colonel Campbell who after doing so gave us a speech. He said "What strikes me most is the fine spirit, the true spirit of sport with which the defeated members took their defeat. I would like to draw attention to the kindness of the ship officials who have placed everything at

our disposal and spared no pains to make our social gathering a success. It is very pleasing to listen to the performance of the lads who are going to fight for home and liberty. It will be a matter of a few weeks before we part and you will join in the more serious work which you have looked forward to so long. I have been in the presence of a great number of men and had taken notice of faces. I can say that I have not been in charge of a body of more orderly men and feel proud to think of such a fine body of men going to keep the flag flying”.

He sat down and was given hearty applause. He has suffered a great loss since the trip started in the loss of his wife and everyone felt for him. The concert continued. The next item being a recitation by the ships officer “The Light Brigade?” encored and gave a humorous song about a lady who had 3 lovers, Irish, German and Scotland and the brogue used by each in their serenade was admirably imitated by him. He received an equally fine reception and promised to think of something before the concert was over. Subsequently he gave us a piece about a bachelor who was courted by a widow and 8 daughters, each wanting the prize. It was very amusing. The concert terminated by the men singing popular choruses and the national anthem.

Tuesday 22 August 1916

Played a game of draughts with Jim Murchland. I beat him once and he beat me twice. The awnings were put up to keep the rays of the sun off the troops but we have been having very mild weather up to date. Saw a lot more flying fish.

Wednesday 23 August 1916

Woke feeling fairly fresh after a night on deck with the exception of a cold or flu which I have not been able to shake off up to the present, Had some more signalling and physical jerks. Mr Hunt told of an amusing time he had on the night we crossed the line. He on that night took one of the wireless men to the rail and pointed out over the sea. Everyone on board is always on the alert to see anything that passes, so there was a general rush to see what it was. After gazing studiously into space for a few minutes one enquired of Mr Hunt, what it was that had excited his interest. “Don’t you see it” he enquired. “No” they chorused. “What is it”. “**Why – the equator**”. Then the crowd melted away. Had some more skipping today and put up a record for skipping. I did 107 turns in 30 seconds and skipped 171 on one foot. Have also gained some little proficiency at given the rope 2 turns to one jump keeping it up for 5 or 6 turns. Today signallers had an argument and settled it in the usual manner. Gloves. One got a bang on the jaw bone and wisely gave in. So I suppose the victor is now certain that he was in the right. One had got kinked for using obscene language. The guests of his majesty’s pleasure have started a small paper which they have named the Klink Chronicle. Of course it is in ordinary writing and some of the jokes are not bad. One is the “The military police are all vaccinated which explains why they never catch anything”. Another good one was a letter written by some son of the soil who was supposed to have landed at Cape Town. It was something to the effect “*Deer muther, I am riteing to you but I am not allowed to tell you that we called at Cape Town and that we are going to England. A lot of the ossifers and men got sum fethers. I will try and get sum eggs to send you to put under the black ospington? so that you can sel the fethers to the ladies in Row St*” and so on. **We are getting wireless news of war** and today we hear of another North Sea fight which we accounted for 2 of the enemies submarines but losing 2 of our own light cruisers. The Hun have captured the whole of some villages and the Russians have sent a number of troops to Salonika. It is very warm on the deck on which I am now writing but will soon get up on deck and get some fresh air. It is amusing to hear all the rumours that get going round the ship. One day soon after leaving W.A. I heard that one of the troops had died “fallacy”. One day we hear from our confidential mess mate that on account of the fine weather we have had since leaving the Cape, that we are ahead of our time and will therefore have to anchor until we are

ordered forward. I have secured a few snaps taken by one of our lads of the coolies having prayers on their Xmas.

Thursday 24 August 1916

Three of the pioneers were awarded 3 days fatigue which consists of **sweeping decks and scrubbing etc for not having shaved one day**. Saw what appeared to be land when **I rolled out of hammock on top deck**. In evening Rowe brought tin of preserved pineapple and we had a tuck in.

Friday 25 August 1916

Torrential rainfall, early in the morning. Came down fast and furious Some of the **chaps names taken by the police for talking to coolies** which is against the rules of the ship.

Saturday 26 August 1916

Another **sports day** which was all boxing. The majority of the boxers made things very willing and although the rounds were limited to 3 there wasn't much wind left in either of the combatants when the time was up. There was one trying his science called Jackson, a big clean faced Russian who makes very curious grimaces and keeps his hands moving all the time. He used to shoot in like a young whirlwind and could use his feet well. Every time he struck he kicked up a foot at the same time. On one occasion he was boxing with another soldier when he hit his opponent after the whistle blew. He put a glove on either side of the soldier's face and kissed him on the cheek. The finals are to be fought one day next week. Today has been a fine day.

Sunday 27 August 1916

Have to go on guard today at intervals of 2 hours with a 4 hour space between each. Very hot day and makes one feel hot in a uniform. I was put on the 3rd relief so managed to attend C of E service. The chaplain chose for his text.

Had dinner and went on duty and I struck an easy position. Nothing to do but sit down, at which I excel. Nothing occurred of any particular interest until about 2 o'clock Monday morning when one of the W.A. left his foot drop out of the hammock and kicked a dixie from the table immediately below him. It dropped on a lad who was sleeping on the floor with a big clutter. A high seemed to go right through the crowd as the noise moved them in their sleep. Everyone was soon asleep again.



1916 Postcards of Mindelo, St Vincent Island Cape Verde

Chapter 4 Cape Verde, Africa to Plymouth England

Monday 28 August 1916

Came off guard at 10am. Saw some land. Part of some small island. Towards evening we came in sight of **St Vincent which is a Portuguese Island.**



This being the **first foreign port we have touched** and also the first I have ever seen. It is a bare looking place so far as trees or grass is concerned. It is a great mystery to me to know how the people exist. Despite the lateness of the hour the **niggers soon made an appearance in their boats** trying to sell their wares. They have coral necklaces and purses made from some brown seeds which were very pretty. **Our dream of ripe bananas and juicy pine apples was painfully awakened.** The bananas were green. The mangoes would do well to represent the emerald isle and the pineapples were all leaves.

Tuesday 29 August 1916

Day very hot. Niggers very plentiful. They are very good divers and will soon get a coin thrown in the water. I bought a bag (a hand bag) made of small seeds all threaded with cotton which must have taken a long time to make. The niggers had oranges as well which were extremely tough and very sour. Another rude awakening was the price. We had to pay as much for these unripe products of a dirty land as we have to pay for the ripened fruit in South Australia. The niggers all dress in bare skins. The lads had to have a bit of fun so started to pelt the darkies with potatoes, at which they retaliated with mangoes. There is a fair number of vessels in port. One man of war which is one of the older class, as she is fitted with the ram which the newer types do not. As in the present type of big guns it is impossible to get near enough for that purpose. **The blacks started to sell and smuggle beer and whisky on board** with the result that dealing with the natives was stopped. The port is always very calm as there is a high hill all round which makes a very effective breakwater. The passage into anchorage is about a mile wide and extends inland about a mile and a half. Some of the mountain are so high you can see the tops above the clouds.

Wednesday 30 August 1916

Awoke feeling fresh after sleep on deck. **Every thing is dirty below on account of coal dust** which floats about everywhere. One or 2 chaps wanted to have a swim yesterday but as it was not permitted they fell over. Whether it was accidental or intentional I don't know, but they were not too down hearted about it all the same. During the night a destroyer kept moving around us keeping an eye open for possible submarine attacks.

We also took on water yesterday and I believe I saved one of their hose being snapped. The water ship pump the water into our tanks through huge hose (rubber). I think the Captain wished to straighten the ship up a bit, so as he sent the ship a little to the right. The niggers who were looking after the ropes holding the 2 ships together must have mistook his orders for he let the rope go too slack. I could see that the hose was still connected to our ship, so I yelled to the nigger to tighten up. He did so and it wasn't a moment too soon, as the strain had started to be felt on the hose. The hose was strapped to a rail. The strap broke and swung a nigger off his feet but the rope saved the hose. Today has been very uneventful so far. The blacks have a bit of a drag which they connect to the back of their boat and scrape a round for coal and shells. They are sometimes rewarded with a very large lump which has been dropped overboard when a vessel has been coaling. Some of the young **piccaninies try their hand at swimming**. There was one there about 5 years old with a tummy like a football. He would jump out of the boat into about 30 feet of water and his brothers would do the rescue act. If he got a bit slow in hopping out they would grab him and forcibly eject him. The little chap would come to the surface with his face the picture of misery, probably on account of swallowing too much of the sea. They all liked dry bread in fact they didn't seem to mind wet bread for if you threw them a loaf which fell in the water, they would just squeeze the sea water out and down with the rest.

The flag ship was not very far away from us and some of the lads signalled to the crew, one stated that they had not been on land for 7 months. **No Jack Tar business for me**. The other boat A44 and transport arrived about 11 o'clock and arrangements were made to transfer **the lads who were left behind at Cape Town** to our ship. They came aboard just before we left. There were 2 or 3 still missing. It appears that they again missed the transport when she was ready to sail from Cape Town. The Colonel did not punish the men who had missed our ship at Cape Town. We weighed anchor at about 4 and lined up 4 deep on the top deck to do honour to the flag ship. They cheered us first, then we gave them a rousing Australian cheer which fairly made the ears ring. There is rumours floating about the ship, that Romania has joined the allies but I have my doubts. A Dutch steamer left Porte Grande about an hour before us but we were not long overhauling her. She had 4 masts placed differently to any that I have yet seen. The masts were in pairs. One pair aft and the other pair fore. The front pair being about 20 feet apart so far as I could judge and the other pair the same. One of the lads said they were placed so as to put the canvases up between the poles to save coal on a windy day when going with it. Another said that it was placed so by reason of the football enthusiasts who were on board and the masts were used as goal posts. Everything is black with coal dust and it comes off whenever you happen to strike it. Just before we left, the officers bought a lot of **mangoes which are about the size of an onion and shaped like an egg**. I shied them at the niggers. They scored a few hits. The blacks dived after the fruit and saved a lot. Rather an expensive amusement I thought. I don't think there was a man aboard sorry to leave Porte Grande.

Thursday 31 August 1916

Day cooler. Had a big clean up on board. Kicking coal dust out of corners where it wasn't paying for board and scrubbed the floor of deck.

Friday 1 August 1916

Sea a bit rough today. Windy during last night. Sat near the stern of the ship and one of the troops that we had taken on board from Cape Town told me that thousands of troops called at Cape Town. One of the lads who was left behind at Cape Town and was taken aboard from the A44 or the **Westralia** said that on the troop ship they had a good time crossing the line.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Westralia_\(1897\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Westralia_(1897))



They rigged up a canvas bath and everyone was put well under the water. A custom which has been in vogue hundreds of years. Our unit was on guard today but I had no duties for the day. Had another interesting discussion with mates in the pioneers.

Saturday 2 September 1916

An amusing incident occurred this morning. One of our lads was having a bit of a snooze after he made his bed. Another soldier placed a bottle of whisky which previously contained canteen ale (a non-intoxicant) although the label might lead one to suppose that it was the brewed business, alongside his head. A corporal appearing soon after immediately came to the conclusion that the lad was drunk. He began to ask all sorts of questions about the way he had got the drink. How long he had been like it etc. Of course the boys thoroughly enjoyed the joke. **Tried quoit throwing** with indifferent success. This afternoon sports were held once more. The boxing finals were fought off and some amusing items were given by competitors in various ways. The competition in whistling was good. One man had to whistle to his mate a certain tune that he was told to. To make it difficult there was beside a warbler yet another canary who had a different tune. The one who managed to get the tune first wrote it on a piece of paper and ran with it to the other end of deck where the judge was standing. It was rather a medley when one was whistling "Home sweet Home" and the other rag-time. Another item was a boot uniform and puttee race (*Leggings wrapped spirally around lower leg - pronounced Putties*).

Everything was mixed up and there was a bit of exchanging done after the race was over. A **Charlie Chaplin impersonation** was also on the programme. The officers had the correct clothing for it and a very good attempt was made by a lad in the 18/16 who took 1st Prize. As we are getting near the war zone all lights are to be extinguished at sunset. C.O. of troops desires everyone to attend one or other services tomorrow as we may not meet again together onboard on a Sunday. Had my haircut.

Sunday 3 September 1916

Day very good. Attended service on the deck immediately below the bridge. Chaplain read from the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy. He said it would be most likely our last Sunday together as we are nearing England. Told us to keep the green covers on books from which we sing. The offer was accepted by the majority present. Tea is a good deal different from home. On this occasion we had bread and jam and cheese and tea.

Monday 4 September 1916

Had physical jerks at half past 8. It is well we have some compulsory exercise as we would become too lazy to do any on our own. Sea is getting a bit rougher which is to be

expected as we are nearing the **Bay of Biscay**, the roughness of which is a byword. **Saw 2 sailing cargo vessels** today, they were a very pretty sight. One passed very close and was going a good rate as there was a strong wind in their favour. Had a little physical exercise in the evening which was not compulsory. Intend sleeping downstairs tonight as the wind is getting a trifle chilly, beside the presence of spray in the wind. We have to keep port hole blocked up now on account of the likelihood of a submarine popping up and discharging a torpedo at our waist line.

Tuesday 5 September 1916

Saw a 2 funnel vessel in the distance. Yesterday our Quarter Master Sergeant Mullins fell about 8 feet onto the solid deck and landed on his side. The stretcher bearers were soon in attendance and conveyed the sufferer to the hospital. He was a little stunned, he is about again today. There has not been any serious illnesses on board. Mr Riley has had a rough time with Influenza and ear ache, but is feeling a lot better now. Today we had to put on our uniforms and equipment and appear in marching order. This was done to check off all the parts that were missing. One of our lads lost his cap overboard some time ago by reason of the wind lifting it off. He reported his loss this afternoon, when Mr Lackman came around to check the lost portions of uniform. About 10 minutes after this he was on deck and the wind carried away his hat. Rather unlucky wasn't he? Had porridge and meat for breakfast this morning. Left soap and tin in wash house. Returned but no trace could be found. Warning for forgetfulness. **A special guard has been put on now on the lookout for submarine periscopes.** They are armed with rifles and ball. They had a few shots today to get their eye in. Everyone appears to be getting a budget ready to send home as soon as they reach port. The war news are very good. A part comes from a wireless station in Cornwall and the rest from the Eiffel Tower in France. It is to the effect that we are pushing the enemy pretty well. England also seems to be putting the screw on Greece, who like her name is a bit slippery. The Klink Chronicle is out again today with a few jokes. One is "In America they eat what they can and can what they can't". Everyone is feeling anxious to get on land again.

Wednesday 6 September 1916

Wrote a number of letters to post on arrival at England. Another wind jammer passed us today. Had life boat drill. Everything is dropped and it makes one feel a bit excited as you never know whether it is genuine or not. I was in the midst of a letter to Auntie Sarah when the bugle sounded for life belts. Had gloves on with Murchland in the evening. Stretchers not required for either of us.

Thursday 7 September 1916

Went on guard at 10 o'clock. Got on at wireless room to keep lads from getting too near and making a noise near. As it is situated near the canteen there is a bit of work to do when the canteen is opened at first. Funds are getting low with the majority so they don't rush it quite as much as they used. Have been busy writing to friends. **Expect to arrive in England very soon.** Made a mistake on the second guard in time and was 5 minutes late. Sergeant of the Guard pretended to be angry and then laughed. I had not previously been on that relief so it was excusable. The wireless operator said that he was informed last night that there were a **couple of submarines sighted ahead of us.** An order is issued that no-one may smoke or light matches after 7 o'clock. Another patrol of N.C.Cs have to parade the ship to enforce the order. One of our lads took a Lieutenant's name for smoking a cigarette after 7. I stopped one of the wireless men. Guard does not go on my post until 6 o'clock in morning, so will have my sleep undisturbed. There is a splendid moon, the sea looks like a long streak of silver.

Friday 8 September 1916

A very fine day and sea fairly calm, very little swell. Sight a fishing trawler early this morning. Everyone had a good look at it, feasting their eyes on the first indication of land. The ship looked very peaceful there. Ships of this type, perhaps larger, have played an important part in the present war, picking up floating mines. We were all ordered to wear our life belts today for safety or in case we happened on a mine. It isn't too comfortable. Went on guard as soon as I got up this morning from 6 until 8 and then had breakfast. Bread was very much like dough and tastes cloggy. Met a man yesterday who used to work for Tom Rodgers called Private (?) He seems to be a nice man and is in the A.M.C (*Medical Corps*). He has been to Lemnos (*island of Greece*) and was returned and is now on the way to the front again. See a few land birds today and about a dozen fishing smacks (*traditional fishing boat used off Britain in Atlantic*). A mist has worked up towards evening. Everyone is busy who has not already done so in preparing to himself for shore. Another issue of the Seang Bee Sea Breezes which shows the ship's inspection which is done every day. One can easily understand that if cleanliness is not enforced things are liable to become very disorderly among a crowd of men. The picture shows a picture of what the inspection appears to the average soldier. The colonel is the central figure and is something like him. Enough to know who it is meant for and that's all. Mr Riley is feeling well again now except for a little deafness in one of his ears. We are hoping and expecting to get in at 1 o'clock tomorrow, accidents and submarines excepted.



Chapter 5 Arriving in Plymouth. Stationed at Salisbury Plains.

Saturday 9 September 1916

Sight more fishing boats and trawlers. **Sight first bit of England** before breakfast. A very pretty castle could also be seen. A destroyer passed close to us. A dirigible balloon hung in the air like a fat pig that has got caught in a whirlwind. After breakfast we pass the Eddystone Light House which has been a great trial to build and was once laid low by the fury of the sea. Another destroyer made its appearance from France and overtaking us, steamed ahead quite easily. We **steamed into Plymouth** about 3 o'clock. We came off at 5 and boarded the train which would take us to Salisbury Plains. We raced through the gathering darkness until we reached Exeter where the Mayoress had a present in the shape of a drink of tea and a bun for every man. It was a great relief and stopped sundry headaches etc and put fresh life into us. It was about 10 o'clock then and we had another 5 hours ride in the train to do. As far as could be judged by the moonlight we were passing through very pretty country scenery and would have liked to have had a look at same by daylight. We had to mind our 2 kit bags and overcoat and equipment on the way from Plymouth.

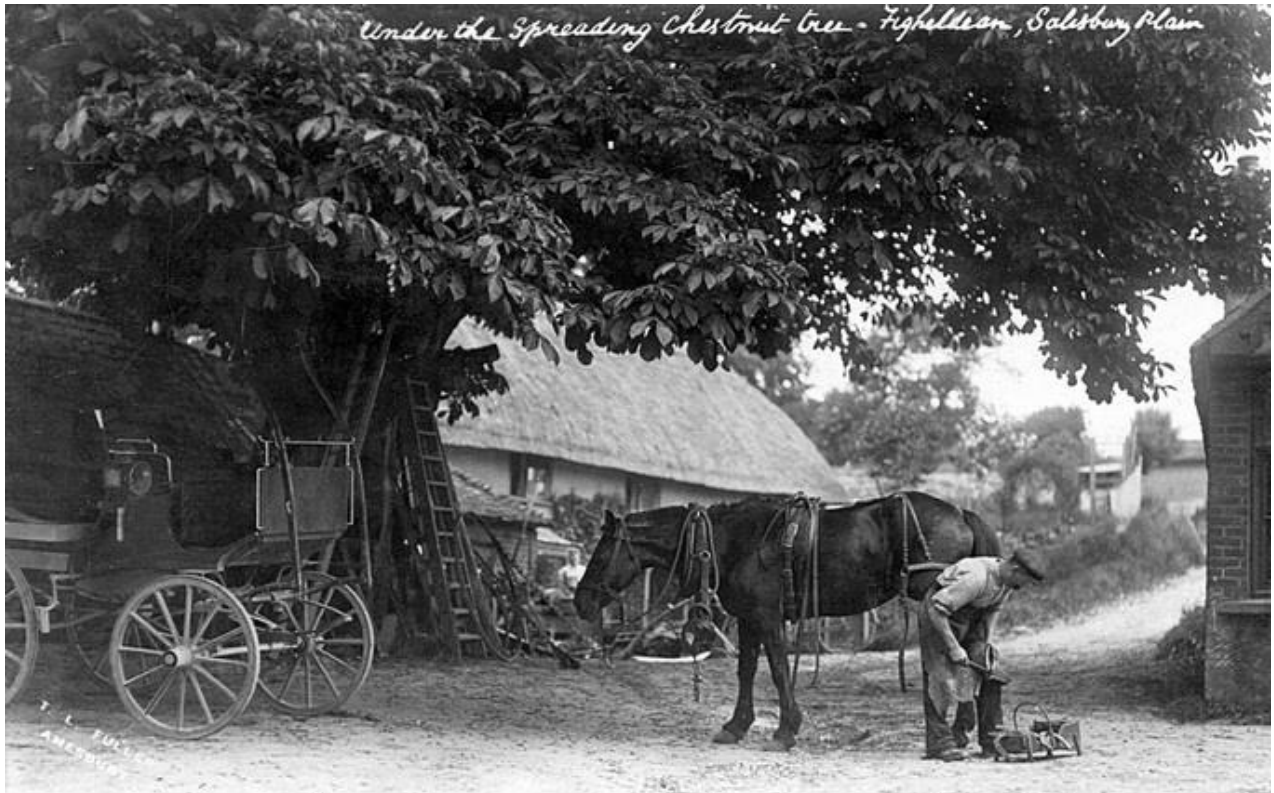
Sunday 10 September 1916

Continued on until we got to a station past Salisbury, called Hansbury, where we disembarked. Just before we got there a train passed us loaded with a draught of troops for France. We left our kit bags to be brought on by motor lorries, whilst we started out on a six mile march to our new quarters. We had all been up from 6 o'clock the previous day and were beginning to feel a trifle tired. We had 3 rests before we got to our destination reaching there by about 5 o'clock. As there was absolutely no preparation made for us we had to wait around until after 8 before we could get an breakfast which consisted of bully beef and dry biscuits. We had to gather up our bails of blankets and carry them and kit bags, rations etc about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the position where we expect to be stationed. Everyone is feeling tired after the long hours and strenuous exercises. I have gone asleep several times writing these notes down. The sun has come out fairly warm today. The motors do not go very steady around these parts. The roads are in good fettle for quick travelling. Attended a meeting in the Salvation Army barracks which I enjoyed. As no tents were available we had to sleep in a big tent where the men have their meals. Several **air ships have been floating** around this morning and we who are new to the sight, enjoyed it thoroughly. There is a very big hangar situated about 1 mile and a half from here in which there is a number of aeroplanes. **We are in the 13th Training Base, Rolleston.** There is also 2 observation balloons about 100 yards from here. There is a number of rifle butts about here and a good deal of practice indulged in. The villages are very pretty and everything is old fashioned. The Stonehenge is about 3 miles from here and the chestnut tree under which the village (**Figheldean**) blacksmith wrought and caused a poet to turn to rhyme. There is plenty of ways of getting any luxuries. The potatoes which we get for our meals are very good and we are getting a bit settled down.

Monday 11 September 1916

Some of the company had to go on physical jerks this morning and the instructor put them nicely into their stride. After breakfast we had some exercises. After dinner we were all **inoculated against typhoid**. The injection stung a trifle. The doctor was Mr Goode from Terowie. He said that he wished he was back in Burra again when I told him where I came from. We had tea and then I took a walk down to the Y.M.C.A. building and sent a telegram to home saying I was well, also wrote a letter to Stan Bishop and Ray Woods,

who is a sweetheart of a lady of my acquaintance. The head of the Y.M.C.A. has a half hour every evening to have a hymn or two and prayer, Returned to tent and slept well.



**Pictures by T.L.Fuller of Amesbury 1914-1918
(1) Figheleean Smithy (2) Route march past Stonehenge (3) Tidworth Barracks**

Tuesday 12 September 1916

Went on **sick parade** and got some medicine from orderly. Officer who is our C.C. for Mr Lackman has been transferred to B Company. While we are in D Company said that we would have no drill today on account of having injections. Received a letter from Mother, Minette and Tom Ashton. We are situated in the 13th Training Base, Rolleston, which is about **6 miles from Amesbury**. Today we had a lecture from Dr Goode and while the **lecture was on general French**, who was expected, appeared with his staff and the commandant of the camp. We were all stood to attention and then the General told the doctor to carry on. He did so but appeared to be a trifle nervous. In the evening I had a look at the Salvation Army Barracks and had a yarn with 2 members of the Royal Flying Corps.

Wednesday 13 September 1916

Had breakfast which included **margarine**, being the first I have eaten to my knowledge. It is very similar to butter. After breakfast we had a march for about 2 miles through very pretty country. There is a fine lot of mushrooms to be found about the fields. We were then marched back to dinner. After which the Lieutenant took us to see **Stonehenge** which is of historic interest having been built or erected hundreds of years before the coming of Christ. A lot of huge slabs have fallen. There is a fence around the place and a caretaker who keeps enterprising tourists from getting bits off the big stones. There are some holes sunk in the rocks which appear to be as hard as granite. The rocks which rest on the uprights have a round hole cut in them in which a jutting piece fits. **Thrupence is charged for entry** to this old spot. We were afterwards marched back by a different route. The roads are very good in these parts. They are as well kept as streets. **Wildflowers also grown in plenty**. The farmers are haymaking at present. I saw **a two horse binder at work** in a paddock. In the evening I took a stroll to a **little village called Shrewton** which is about 2 miles from our camp. There are a number of thatched houses to be found there. On this night the members of one of Australian Battalion were giving a concert in aid of some hospitals. Had a look at the Church of England tent which had been put up for soldiers to read and write in etc. I got a few postcards in there. After which I started off for camp. I jumped on the back step of a motor transport which stopped near the tent and got a ride nearly to the camp. When it turned a corner it slowed down a trifle so I made a careful calculation of the speed and hung on and set my feet going. I put up a record for 5 yards when I got off, but kept on my feet.

Thursday 14 September 1916

In the morning before breakfast, we had **physical exercises under a Russian Sergeant Major**. He is a finely built man and a splendid wrestler. He makes the men do the thing properly with the correct click as everything is done in military. After breakfast we were lined up to be paid but had to do a short route march. Had the sighting test which I passed. In the evening borrowed a bicycle from the Captain of the Salvation Army who is stationed here and went for a ride to Lark Hill which is the name of the camp about 2 miles east of us. The place looks like a town here with its huts all over the place. There is about **30,000 Australians** alone in this plain. The camps on this plain are dotted over an area of 10x5 miles which gives me an idea of the number of troops that are here.

Friday 15 September 1916

Air is getting a bit chilly and we Australians notice it, but the Tommy does not very much. Our physical exercises are of the type that warms a man up, for they are pretty strenuous. The **observation balloon** was sent up and it was allowed to ascend to a great height as it was a very clear day. Am feeling rather stiff in the muscles of the legs owing to the

unusual work, after such a long spell on board the Seang Bee. Had some platoon drills today and sausages for breakfast.



Pictures by T.L.Fuller of Amesbury 1914-1918

(1) Civilians in Amesbury (2) WW1 Biplanes (3) Troops marching thru Amesbury

Saturday 16 September 1916

In the morning we had to take out the board flooring in our tents and scrub them. After allowing them to dry they were put back again. At 11 o'clock we were taken on a route march for about 3 miles. When we returned we had dinner. After which we were allowed to go where we pleased within a 5 mile area. I went to **Shrewton** and had a look around the little place. I secured some postcards and found that a portion of the Baptist Church is

open for the use of troops to do writing etc I saw a row of buildings which was erected by subscription, the rent from which was to be given to the poor from the date of erection 1842. It appears that there was a great flood at that time (1841) which washed a lot of property away from the residents of a number of villages. I had afternoon tea in one of the rooms of this row which I enjoyed. It being the first table cloth I have sat at for 9 weeks. In the evening I walked home with Jack Edward and **retired to my canvas castle**.

Sunday 17 September 1916

Went on **sick parade** before breakfast and did not get back until breakfast was just about on. Too much to do, so I missed church parade. Helped straighten up the tent and then shaved and wrote a few postcards. After dinner I accompanied Arthur Riley to the hospital to give letters to Jack Palmer and Tolhurst. They were both as well as could be expected. Returned to C of E Hut and did some writing until late in the evening and then attended Salvation Army meeting, I was late but got a seat. Had intended going to **Shrewton** where there was a H.T.G. service to be held in the Wesleyan Church. Had a light lunch at Salvation Army Barracks before returning.

Monday 18 September 1916

We were given a short march before breakfast instead of the physical exercises. After breakfast we were given platoon drill with and without rifles. I received a letter from my **Uncle Jesse John of Bristol** acknowledging the receipt of my letter. His letter was nicely worded and was accompanied by a newspaper cutting of himself. He said that he hoped to see his colonial nephew in Bristol and gave me the address of his son Harry who at present is stationed in London in the Army Services Corps. A number of the members of the Royal Flying Corps are working very near us and I had a yarn with some of them. They appear to think that we are to be commended for coming to fight England's adversary. Put in the evening writing letters.

Tuesday 19 September 1916

Had a march before breakfast, after which we were given platoon with and without rifles. In the afternoon the wind blew over 2 of our mess tents. We were paraded for our fourth inoculation since enlisting, this being the 2nd Para **Typhoid inoculation**. It is a sensation not unlike a wasp sting, it is not liked very much by the lads, some get very ill after it. One young fellow in our tent got ill and vomited. We had no duties to perform after inoculation so wrote a letter to **Harry Humphrys** who is in the Army Services Corps in London. Had a look at a Y.M.C.A. in the evening and weighed myself. I was 12 stone 11 pounds (81kg) with my uniform on. Stayed until after prayers, there were 2 Captain Chaplains present.

Wednesday 20 September 1916

Had no early parade as we have 48 hours leave after inoculation during which time we are not supposed to leave our lines or tents to go anywhere outside the camp. After breakfast had a bit of a rest and wrote a letter of reply to **Uncle Jesse in Bristol**. Received a letter from **Harry Humphrys** who is in the Army Services Corps in London. He is 19 years of age, he expressed a desire to see Australia and seemed to think Australians were to be commended for coming to help England in her great struggle with Germany. In the afternoon the men of our unit helped to shift one of our tents for the officers to have a spread and evening as there was a number of them going to France. In the evening I went with Jack Edwards to **Lark Hill** To a cinema variety show. It was a 2 mile walk and we enjoyed it as we were not pushed for time. Our physical instructor and bayonet instructor who is a **Russian** and champion light weight wrestler of the world was there to **wrestle anyone** who would accept the challenge. A member of the A.M.C. had a go and was put on the mat in 10 ½ minutes, The champion guarantees to put his opponent on the mat in 15 minutes. He does some very neat work with his feet. He gets



Pictures by T.L.Fuller of Amesbury 1914-1918
(1) Camp Bakers by the dozen (2) Bath Time (3) YMCA Camp entertainers

one leg around his opponents neck and over goes his man like a hoop. He wrestled another who proved a fairly tough member. On one occasion he was on his back supported off the ground by hands and feet. The Russian threw himself into the air and

landed wop on the other chaps chest, but could not bend him down. After coming out of the show we had a cup of tea and some cake at a Y.M.C.A. hut, arriving back at our tents just at Lights Out. Today several of our sergeants were reverted to the ranks and Tommy Tapp, a son of a station master of Burra was put in as a sergeant as he having a sergeant's certificate. Thursday 21 September 1916

Australian mail arrived at our company and received 6 letters and 2 papers. Had a short route march, several aeroplanes flew overhead. There is a number of **biplanes** which have the propellers at the rear of the pilot and a machine gun in front. One man is looping the loop at dinner time today. In afternoon we had bayonet drill by the Sergeant Major, the wrestler. It is a new type just out being the best type that has been found. It is fairly strenuous exercise, but it is of vital importance to become as proficient as possible with the bayonet for as everyone knows the German is a well trained nation.

Friday 22 September 1916

When we came on parade this morning the sick parade was called out and a few more than were really ill fell out. The Sergeant Major said that the ones who were not ill would have to go on guard. Today is our companies turn for fatigue duties, I was put on cooks fatigue and had a good time peeling potatoes, cleaning dixies and carrying water for the cook. There is a draught of soldiers going to France tonight. The canteens are to be shut at ½ past eight, so that the soldiers will be gathered up in time as some of them celebrate the occasion of their departure well but not wisely. Got photos today which were taken on Wednesday of tent mates and myself. Saw the soldiers march away, it was very dark and the officers had electric lights to see their men and read the roll. The band were playing and as the men passed the different camps, a cheer could be heard, which gave fresh energy to their step.

Chapter 6 Transferred to 43rd Battalion

Saturday 23 September 1916.

Came on parade as usual and a number of our names was called and we found that **we were to be drafted into the 43rd Battalion**. We were all feeling a bit disappointed about it, but know it was no use complaining as the reinforcements are always liable to be broken up into different Battalions. Had to pack up kit bags and get ready to go with the rest of troops to Lark Hill, where the 43rd are camped. Put some lunch in the lunch tin which came in handy later on as we had to wait a good while at headquarters before we were marched. Our kit bags were brought on by transport. When we arrived at **Lark Hill**, which is about 2 miles from the **Rolleston Camp** we had to wait until the return of the 43rd Battalion, they had been out on a weeks trench digging. As I was strolling around I saw a chap with a buggy load of bananas. They were a fine lot, his bananas were about 7 inches in length. I told him if he gave me one, I would show him where he could sell the lot. He was charging 1/6 a dozen for the bananas. I showed him where our chaps were resting and I believe he sold the lot. I understand that Captain Lott who is O.C. of D Company is a son of Mr Lott of Burra. At about 4 o'clock we were marched before the Colonel and given our usual warning of penalties etc if we should get over the traces. He asked **if there was any buglers present**, I stepped out and Sergeant took my name. We were then issued with our rugs and shown to a hut, there is a vast difference in the accommodation after the bell tents. At tea time we were marched to the mess room and the 43rd gave us a cheer as we entered. We had a splendid tea on cheese bread and jam. After tea went for a stroll on the road and met young Lasky who told me that Harry Davey and Pedesson had fallen victim to the war god. I attended a Lantern (*Slide show*) lecture in the Y.M.C.A. hut, which was good. It was on the Pilgrims Progress and the war scenes.

Sunday 24 September 1916

Felt a trifle cold during the night, rose about ½ past 7 and had breakfast. A little after 10 went on church parade in the Y.M.C.A. hut, conducted by the Methodist Chaplain. In the afternoon Pasfield and a lad of the 43rd Battalion set out to see the place where "**The Village Blacksmith**" (*a famous postcard by T.L. Fuller of Amesbury who photographed much of the troops training*) lived and died. Our walk lay over some pretty fields and was about 2 ½ miles walk. The village is still old fashioned. I saw one building which was built in 1666. The Blacksmith Shop is situated on the outskirts of the village of **Figheidean**. It is still in use. The old "chestnut tree" still stands by the side of the shop. It is a very big tree and evidently very old. After securing some leaves from the tree which were broken off by some soldier boys. We visited the church (and grounds) where he used to worship and his daughter used to sing in the choir. I wrote my name in the visitors' book, also on the wall, immediately above the doorway of the passage stairway to the bell pull. I got some wool off the rope with which the bell was rung. We also visited his grave and the inscription reads:

*"In memory of Mr Thos Sheppard
Who departed this life 19th March 1806
Aged 85years
Since I with grief was sore oppressed
That I could bear no more
I hope to God's eternal rest
He will my soul restore
Near this spot lies his father, mother, two brothers, four sisters and his daughter
My friend is gone and left me here
In this sad world of grief and care
My children fatherless he left behind
I hope to them you'll be both just and kind"*

The above was all written on his tombstone. We then walked to **Bulford** which is about a mile from there and about the same distance from the camp. We had afternoon tea there and listened to the chimes of the church bells which was nearby. The old market place is still in this village. It is in the street and the place where the salesmen stood was made of square stones piled one on the other like steps. The stones were worn down by the feet of many generations. It was built something after the following: (*diagram of steps*)
After viewing this ancient erection we started off for the camp again. Stayed to service in the Salvation Army Barracks.

Monday 25 September 1916

We had to be on parade at ¼ past six this morning to be put in our places. The heads say that the reinforcement will have to undergo a weeks special training before we are put into our respective companies. Had to do **squad drill** and **had lectures on the rifle** for the morning, After dinner, the troops were given a half holiday to attend sports. I took the opportunity of trying to get my kit bag from the old camp. **I hired a bicycle** from a man nearby and mounted right away but after I had gone a hundred yards the tyre burst with a bang. I pushed it back and cash was returned, will try and get kit tomorrow. We are expecting to be reviewed by the King on Wednesday.

Tuesday 26 September 1916

We were provided with new equipments of webbing in readiness for the **grand review tomorrow**. The morning was spent in fitting up the webbing and getting everything in order for the **march to Bulford** to do the march past, as we had to go through the whole affair as it would be done tomorrow. We had an early dinner and then set out for Bulford. It was about a 3 mile march and we had packs with overcoat and rubber ground sheet. We also carried our rifles. On our arrival at the grounds we were marched in for the

distance of about 1/3 mile and were allowed to rest, while the rest of the troop get into position. The **troops were there in their thousands** and looked like ants. They were all Australians. There were **field guns, light horse men and medical corps**. The grass was flattened down by the troops as though steam rollers had passed over it. Altogether I believe there was about **35,000 troops** present at the rehearsal.

Wednesday 27 September 1916

Our company were detailed for fatigue today so we will miss seeing the King today. Had to go on coal fatigue which was not too pleasant as it came to rain. We had to dress in our blueys and put our water proof sheets over our shoulders. The only thing, I missed seeing of the review, is the King himself as I was present yesterday at the rehearsal. In the evening a mate and myself **walked to Rolleston Camp** to get my kit bag which I had left behind last Saturday. I got a letter there from **Harry Humphrys**. Arrived home fairly late, tired after carrying the kit bag for about 3 miles.

Thursday 28 September 1916

Given a little **bayonet exercise** and instruction this morning. The instructor is a Sergeant Major who has been to Aldershot and got his stripes as an instructor. He is very active and has a good voice of command. He told us of an instance where the practice in bayonets had made a man act instinctively which is very necessary when one is in a charge as for the time one practically lose their reason and act more on instinct than anything. This man had a lot of practice and was in a charge. He was suddenly confronted with a big German. He got in a blue funk and never remembered a thing of what happened until he found the German on his bayonet, which showered that he must have acted instinctively. This instructor showed us a few dodges to use in a bayonet charge. He showed us how to throw our hat to make the German shut his eyes. We had to platoon drill with rifles today which made us tired. Mail closed today but managed to get in a short letter posted to mother with a postcard of self and tent mates

Friday 29 September 1916

Had an early breakfast in anticipation of a route march. But the new reinforcements did not go on the march. We did not have very much to do. In the afternoon we had **practice in musketry**. Rapid loading and unloading. Has been drizzling a bit all day.

Saturday 30 September 1916

Went on **sick parade to have tooth seen to** from which the filling had fallen out. Doctor gave me a note to leave me off drill for the morning. After breakfast took some washing to the military laundry. I spoke to an A.M.C. Sergeant Major who informed me that **the dentist is not working on Saturday**. Went for a walk to **Amesbury** arriving in time to have dinner. The scenery is **especially beautiful** about a quarter of a mile from the village on the road from **Lark Hill to Amesbury just after crossing a bridge**. The trees grow very close and the trunks are covered with ivy. There are cedars and elms and chestnut trees. Had a look around the Church of England which is a very old building. It has been rebuilt in places. The old door is still there with its massive lock and key. The chain that previously held the bible is attached to the door. There is some ancient carving from wood around the rafters. One carving depicts Satan with Judas half swallowed. There is a big pipe organ in it now. There is also a small pedal **organ on which I played** a few hymns. After viewing this ancient church I went through the little streets and saw the old inns which were still standing in various places. The most have a square archway. Took a stroll to where **motor bus stops to take passengers to Salisbury**. The bus was filled so had to wait about an hour for another. Got in early the next time and we started on the 8 mile run to **Salisbury**. The roads were in keeping with the usual type to be found in England with the tar paving. At about 4 miles on our journey we passed an old fort

made on a hill. As I could only catch a passing glance, apparently a trench had been made right around by heaping the dirt up. It must have entailed a great deal of work. There were a good number of **picnickers present and a number of college girls waved their hats vigorously as we passed**. We continued another 4 or 5 miles into Salisbury and alighted at the square, where a **paddy's market was in progress**. There were a number of books on one stall and **I thought of my brother who likes his books so well** and had a look at a few. While engaged in this, I heard a voice behind me addressing an enquiry of me of the whereabouts of the 48th Battalion. I knew the voice and turned round to find myself facing **Mr Pressey**, who a few years ago was assistant **Minister of the Redruth Methodist** circuit. The surprise was mutual and we remarked on the coincidence of meeting in the way we had. He had not altered in the least from when I had seen him 2 years ago. He told me had to meet some of his friends and asked me to accompany him. I did so and he introduced me to a Mrs Zeberdee and Miss Newman who is the sister of Mr Newman who came to Australia at the same time as Mr Pressey. They were good enough to take me to **the Salisbury Cathedral** and show me around, It is a tremendous building surrounded with a lovely green. The tower rises to a height of about 450 ft from the ground. On the exterior in niches are placed carvings of biblical characters. Within the place is very vast both in height and width. The tombs of various great men are placed inside with the life size carving of themselves above. The alter, or one of the alters, is a very elaborate affair being in a church within a church. There is a **large pipe organ in this church** also and a beautiful carvings are everywhere and paintings are on the ceilings. I had a glance around and then accompanied my friends around the exterior. Saw also the 14th century market **Poultry Cross** which stands in a in a small space at the corner of some streets.



The 15th century *Poultry Cross* originally marked the section of the market trading in poultry.



Secured a couple of badges and a little curio which resembles a shell for a gun. In it was some views of Salisbury which is magnified by a small but powerful magnifying glass. In the evening had a talk with some Salisbury, one of whom has been called up under the **Derby system**. They who have been examined by the doctor and passed have to wear a black badge on the arm with a crown on it if joining the army. If they are joining the navy they wear a badge with an anchor. Caught the 9.15 bus back to **Amesbury** and walked from there to camp, arriving soon after "Lights Out". My mates were well in the land of dreams and one who seems to have the habit was grinding his teeth in his sleep.

Chapter 7 Training continues October 1916

Sunday 1 October 1916

Time has been put back one hour in England in consequence of which I was able to enjoy an hours sleep before the "Reveille" was sounded. Went on church parade at 10 o'clock. The chaplain took his text from the 4th chapter of Amos "**Prepare to meet your God**". He spoke on the uncertainties of life and the sureness of death and exhorted all to be prepared for the day when we would have to face the God, who had put us here, that God whom all should have to meet. After dinner **went to Durrington** with Sergeant Major McDougall. He told me of his trip through France and of his various experiences. He says that the French treated them well on the run through France. After tea I put in the evening writing.

Monday 2 October 1916

Went on **dental parade**. Rained all morning, but got in an unused hut to shelter while waiting for my turn. Was unable to get teeth done in the morning and so came back again in the afternoon. Got the **tooth bored and filled** in the afternoon. While waiting for the dentist I did a bit of carving in chalk. In the evening went to Amesbury for thanksgiving and attended a sale of gifts to the Harvest. **Thanksgiving Festival** held yesterday. Everything brought a good price. I bought a piece of cake which is easy to carry. Arrived home just before "Lights Out".

Clarence's Diary Book 2

Tuesday 3 October 1916

Still **on platoon drill and rifle exercises**. In afternoon **had musketry**, attended the military cinema and saw Charlie Chaplin doing his usual antics. The pictures are from 6 to 9.

Wednesday 4 October 1916

Had early breakfast as the Battalion were going on a route march. As it rained they were unable to start until after eight. Had **platoon drill and visual training**. These were head and shoulders made of wood, placed in different places on the plain. I managed to pick out 7 out of 10. In the afternoon we had practice on the miniature range. It is a small bore placed in **the barrel of the 303**. In the first shots I placed them all on the wrong target. Despite the fact that we both fired at the same target the shots were all in a 3 inch radius. I fired again and grouped them in a 2 inch radius. Received a letter from cousin Jesse and Mr Pressey.

Thursday 5 October 1916

Had physical exercises before breakfast. After breakfast we had **platoon drill with rifles**. In the afternoon we went to the **trenches** and had practice in getting out, for a night attack. Put in a bit of time after dismissal doing a bit of work with chalk, which abounds in this part. It is to be found at a depth of about 12 inches almost anywhere. There are no big stones within 25 miles of these parts and so it is all the more wonderful that the **Stonehenge** which is made of very big stones were brought to the spot in which they now stand. It is surmised by some that the stones were floated down a small river which runs within 3 miles of the spot and then brought to their destination by means of rollers. This idea is strengthened by the finding of a similar stone to the stones in the temple in the bed of this river.

Friday 6 October 1916

Drizzling again this morning. Physical jerks. After breakfast had platoon drill and Lieutenant L Gunter asked if anyone would like **to try for an N.C.O.** I stepped out and had to drill a squad for a while. Had shooting in miniature range at a disappearing target. I got all five shots on target. In evening went to a **concert in the Y.M.C.A.** for soldiers. There were some good items. One lady proved a fine violinist and made one feel it when she played Annie Laurie. There was also some conjuring tricks by a young man who considerably mystified all present.

Saturday 7 October 1916

After breakfast we were **sent into the trenches** to go through an attack. It proved interesting and gets one used to the method of attacking. Sending a parcel home to via Vancouver. Half holiday in the afternoon and put in early part writing home etc. In evening went to the **Military Cinema** and saw Charlie the tramp. It was highly amusing and gave us side ache.

Sunday 8 October 1916

Slept in until 7 o'clock. Went on church parade and the chaplain took his text from 12th chapter of Matthew, 36th verse. He spoke well on the subject and explained it well. Attended communion and played the organ. Wrote some more letters.

Monday 9 October 1916

Had an early breakfast so as to get good time in at the range. After breakfast we were marched around and had our lunch issued to us. We then marched to the butts (**rifle range**) which is about a mile from the camp. The first shots was a grouping practice. I was posted on a target numbered 13. Thirteen (**is his lucky number**) appears to be a popular number with me. I went into camp on the 13th of March. Left Australia on the 13th of July. Left Cape Town on the 13th of August. On arrival in England we were sent to the 13th Training Base and even on the rifle range I find myself allotted to No 13 target. In the first practice I put 3 shots in No 15 target. Had to shoot over again and got the shots in an 8 inch circle at the 100 yards range. Did fairly well in the rest of the rounds. On arrival back in camp we were given a hot tea to compensate us for the loss of a hot dinner. In evening attended a fellowship meeting in the Y.M.C.A. I played a few pieces on the **vest pocket organ** before the meeting started. These were a number of lads present and we had an enjoyable time and an address from Lieutenant Oliver who is an officer in the 3rd Battalion.

Tuesday 10 October 1916

Today is my birthday and I have to work just the same. I am 22? today. Had another early breakfast this morning to go **shooting again**. Scored fairly well today. The first range was 200 yards, application 5 rounds, secured 13 of a possible 20. The next was 5 rounds rapid at the 200 yards and secured another 13 points. We then fired at the 300 and secured 16 of the possible 20. The next was 10 rounds rapid, load and fire in 50 seconds. Secured 23 of possible 30. The 400 yards was next fired from. There was a choppy wind and I got 13 points. In the rapid firing I secured 14 points. As we had time to spare we then went back onto the 200 yards range and we had to fire one shot in 5 seconds. If you did not hurry, the target would be down before the shot was fired. I secured 108 points for the day. The leading man was 118 and I was about 4th. Got my washing from the Military Laundry.

Wednesday 11 October 1916

Had an early breakfast for the purpose of getting an early start at the range for we had to do **our test shooting** today.

Thursday 12 October 1916

Another early breakfast. Parade at 7.20 and marched to the Butts. Had to fire at figure of head and shoulders from 200 yards range **with gas helmets** on. One has to be very careful in breathing, not to allow any breath to escape in the mask as it will cause the goggles to be smeary. I managed to get the possible on that range as I hit the target 5 times. In the evening I had a yarn with young Goodridge.

Friday 13 October 1916

Had to go to Beach Farm to undergo field practice with rifles. We had a brisk march for about four miles passing through a quiet village called **Netheravon** and then had a spell. We had to march about 7 miles from camp before reaching the field where we were to practice. Just before arriving **we spotted an aerodrome and saw many air ships on the wing**. One passed about 15 feet above our heads. It is pretty to watch them alighting for they come down like a bird. The **practice with the rifle** consisted of shooting targets which appeared from different places. The target stayed up 10 seconds only and in that time we had to shift the sights to the required height, come up from the trenches and fire 2 shots. It was hasty work I must say. Had dinner on the field and then started home again. Arrived back again about 5 o'clock feeling tired and tender of feet.

Saturday 14 October 1916

All reinforcements had a parade and go through all the drill movements. Lieutenant Chumleigh took us in hand and kept us out until after 12. It appears that the N.C.O.s had to go to Beach Farm to go through their field practice. The Lieutenant said that we had been kept drilling overtime as he would have to go with them if our drill was over too soon. We all had a laugh when he explained. In the afternoon I went to Y.M.C.A. to put in a bit of overtime on the **punch ball** which proved very elusive. In evening went to the **Military Cinema** and spent a very good evening. Charlie Chaplin was well to the fore in the role of a married man. Had supper at a tent where some evangelists hold service every night.

Sunday 15 October 1916

Attended a **big parade about a mile from our camp** where the Chaplain General of the Methodist Church and the Chaplain General of the Presbyterian Church addressed us. After dinner Pasfield and Kilsby and myself went for a **walk to Amesbury**. On the way we went through a wood which I went through last Sunday. It was a very pretty walk and we went in a different direction to last time. We came out into a clearing at the bottom of which lay the river (*River Avon*). The whole of the ground on this rise where the wood appears to have been levelled by human agency. A tremendous amount of labour must have been involved in the task. On the opposite side of the stream stood a magnificent building which was called the Abbey (*now Amesbury Abbey Nursing home?*). When we looked on the work done on the hill we thought of the grandeur passed away of all the labour involved for artistic or defensive purposes. We followed the stream along until we came to a little bridge built in the form of a house which was not on the main stream but a side stream. It appeared to have been built a very long time ago. There were two large openings at either side of the house, like very large port holes. There were names and dates inscribed by tourists etc and one was dated somewhere in the 16th century. From there we went further up the stream disturbing wild ducks who seemed to have lived in quietness for some time. We got out of the wood to get to the main road by walking

through the fields through a farm yard. Arriving in **Amesbury we went to the Wesleyan Church** and had afternoon tea in a room at the back which is used for teas etc. After tea adjourned to the church and **practised a few pieces in the soldier choir**. Before service commenced the church was nearly full of soldiers and civilians. The church is a big one and there were seats up the aisle to accommodate the congregation. The chaplain from the camp preached and was listened to with great attention. I sang "Hark there comes a whisper" (Alexander) as a solo. The choir sang "God be with you" as the congregation dispersed. The **walk home in the evening was fairly cool**. Stopped at a Salvation Army hut on the way and had supper and **played a few hymns on the piano**.

Monday 16 October 1916

Bombing practice had to be started today. We also returned our rifles and bayonets to the store. The morning was taken up with lectures on the different **grenades** giving full details of construction, charging and exploding. It proved very interesting. The grenade which is taught first and foremost is the **Mills hand grenade** which is a timed bomb. It is charged with a high explosive and when it explodes it blows the sides everywhere. Every infantry man will have to get a knowledge of these grenades and be able to throw and know how to take apart. We also had a lecture on several other types some of which are fired from a rifle and explode by percussion. These are fairly expensive and the average distance of shooting is 150 yards. In afternoon we were taken out and had **practice throwing bombs** which were non explosive as they were not charged. We practised from the prone position and the kneeling position.

Tuesday 17 October 1916

Had some more practice before breakfast and the **bombs were cold as ice**. During the night several of the lads came in who had been on a days London leave. After breakfast we were given another lecture on explosives which proved interesting. We were shown timing fuse and instantaneous fuse which travel at the rate of 90 ft per second. We were shown gun cotton which has to be fired by a detonator. We were to practice throwing in the afternoon but came on wet so lecture was continued.

Wednesday 18 October 1916

In morning had **practice in bombing attacks**. The attack is supposed to be made after the trenches have been taken and a few Germans left in alleys etc. The formation in which an attack is made is as follows. First comes a man with a bayonet then another, then 2 bomb throwers who throw ahead if any communication trench is found to keep down rifle attacks etc. An N.C.O. follows then 3 or 4 reserve men to take place of casualties. Stones were used instead of bombs. In the afternoon we had **practice with live bombs** which is a bit exciting. We threw the Mills hand grenades which is a time fuse 5 seconds. I throw mine over a parapet made of turf. I managed to throw 28 yards. Had to go on guard at a flag to keep anyone from coming in bounds of the bombing ground. Pieces of the bomb fly a great distance so all precaution is taken. In evening paid and had name taken for London leave.

Thursday 19 October 1916

Bayonet practice was indulged in the morning and in the afternoon we had **sham trench attacks**. It is very necessary to get accustomed to the methods used in an attack as everything would be mixed up in an actual attack. Everything was the same as a real attack, with scouts, snipers, machine gunners and an imaginary barrage. In **evening attended a concert** in Y.M.C.A. given by talent of the different battalions. The band was in full action and gave some very good pieces. There was a few very good singers and one who was a real comic. He gave us some impersonations. One being of the different way that "Alice Where Art Thou" was sung. It was highly amusing. He also gave some

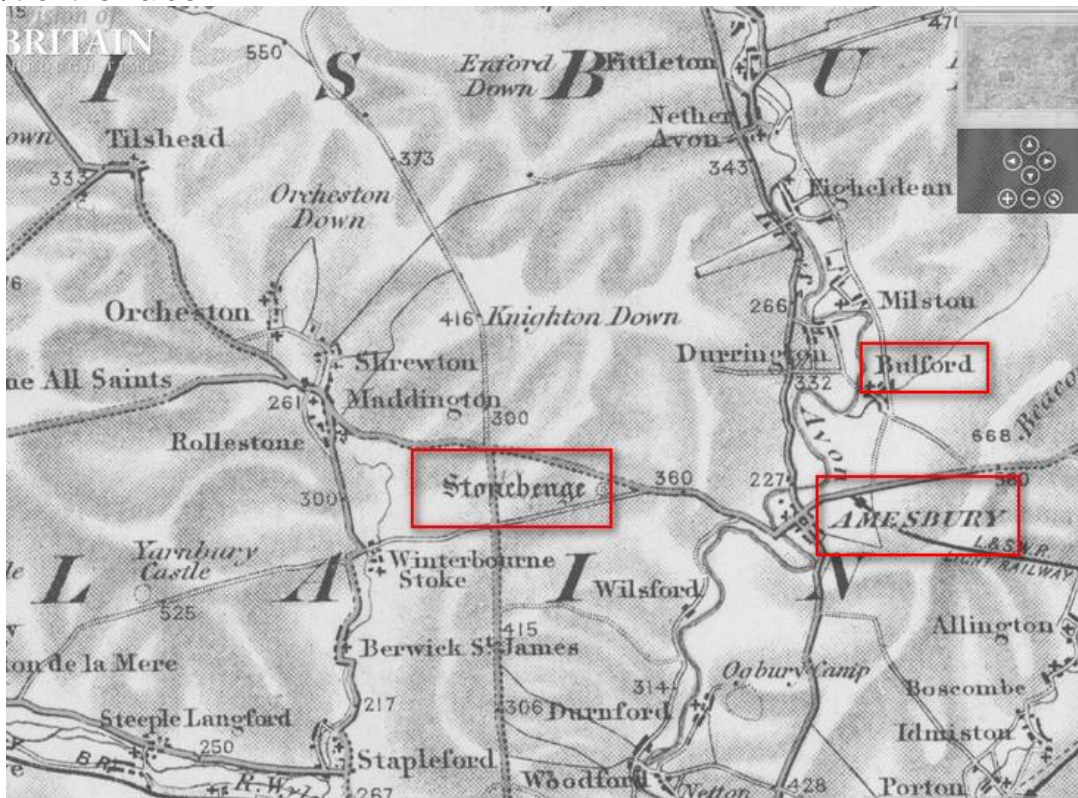
stories. One being of a man who was blamed for the death of a man caused by a bullet which passed through his arm before killing another man. Reason – It was through him that he was killed.

Friday 20 October 1916

Had earlier breakfast as we had to go on a **long march** and do a **sham attack** on a position. We were supplied with 10 rounds of blank cartridges. We **passed by Stonehenge** and kept on for about 4 miles further disturbing dozens of **hares and pheasants** en route. Before reaching the place of attack we spread out in columns of companies. We passed over a field of **turnips** and a young **hay crop** which was heavy marching. Passed quiet little farms and little yards where the **sheep** are sometimes penned. We hid in a wood while our scouts took observations of the land. Discovered the enemy on opposite hill lining a fence. Attacked in short rushes of platoons covering each rush by rifle fire. Messages were passed up the line. Machine guns were located in three places which we fired at. They were heard as the enemy were banging a time in imitation of a machine gun. I thought of **Clem's birthday which is today**. I hope to be home for his next. After the attack we had a rest and then marched home to camp. Arrived feeling tired and hungry. Fare was taken for a ticket to London.

Saturday 21 October 1916

Had a big inspection today by the heads of the Imperial Forces. We had everything on in the state that we expect to go to the front. It was rather cold and we had to mark time to warm our toes some of the time. We had to keep on our feet for about 5 hours. Had dinner at about ½ past one and then fell in again at ½ past 2. We had to give a list of all missing and worn articles. The work articles will be replaced and lost will be obtained at about ¼ of the value.



Sunday 22 October 1916

Slept in a bit this morning. After breakfast attended Church parade. Wrote a letter home and in the afternoon took a **walk to Bulford**. Had lunch and a yarn with some New Zealanders who said that they felt the cold, despite the fact that it often snows in their land. Returned early and retired as in preparation for trip to London on the morrow.

Chapter 8 On leave to London

Monday 23 October 1916

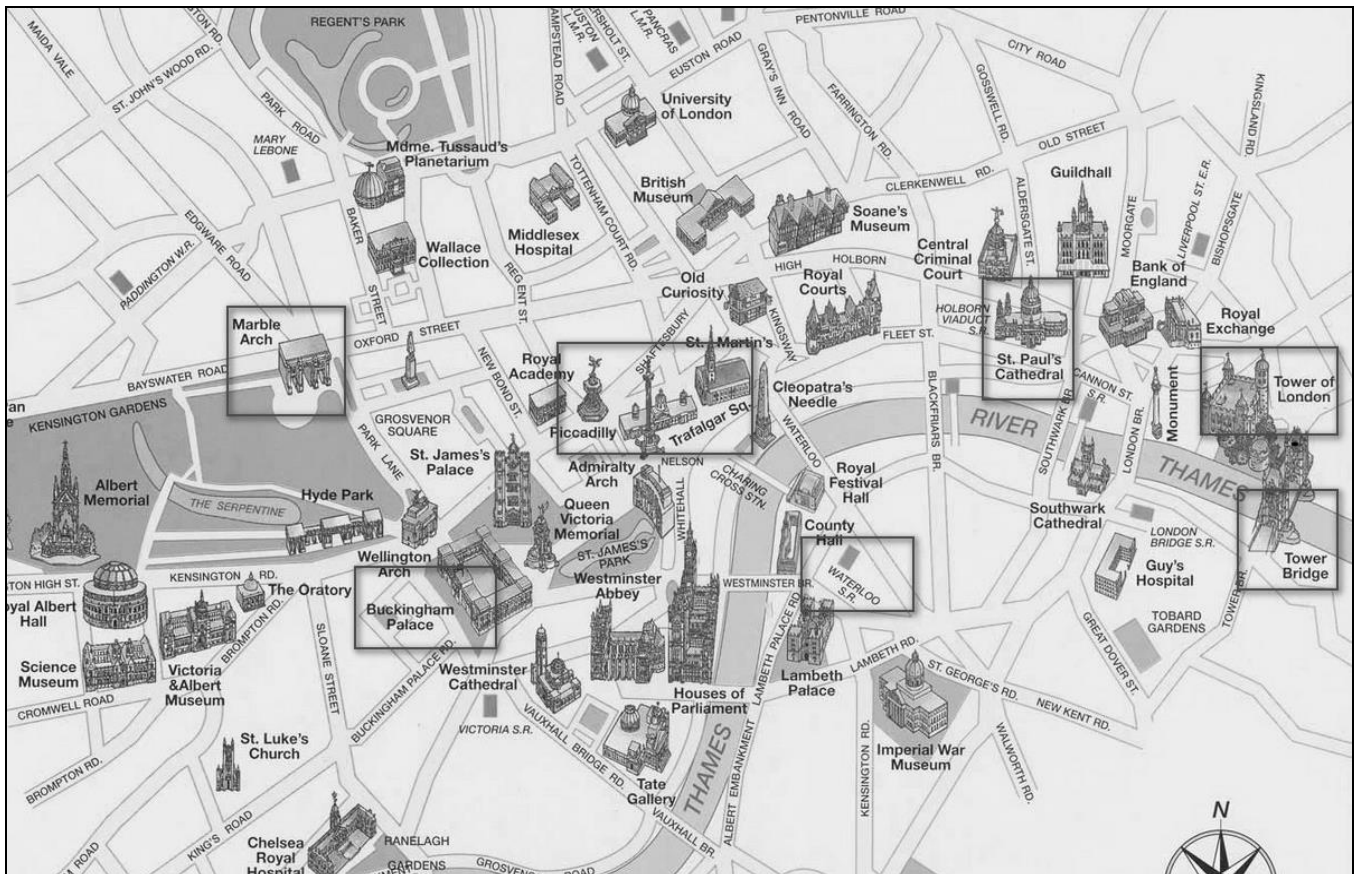
The day of days has arrived . **We are to see the great city on which the world is** supposed to revolve. We were marched to Amesbury station after having been inspected by Lieutenant Chumleigh. Everyone was spruced up for the occasion and looking his best. It showered a little on the 2 mile march and took the gloss of our well polished boots. The **special train** awaited at the little station and everyone felt in holiday spirits. The carriages were well padded and comfortable. We were soon speeding on our way to the great city. The line passed through pretty scenery and was seldom on level country. The land seems to be all hills and dales. On arrival at **Waterloo Station** we set out for a place to dine and to order beds for the night. We went or at least some of us went to the A.I.F. in Horseferry Road. We had a big dinner on a real white table cloth. We sailed through the three courses in fine style. After dinner it behoved me to **look up my cousin Harry** who is in the motor transport at Grove Park. The ever obliging policeman, who is indeed a walking directory, gave me the required information. I rode in a tram part of the way and then caught a bus which took me within a mile of the camp and then a lad driving a goods van gave me a lift to the camp. After a bit of a search I found the place where my cousin was billeted. He was not in, so strolled around to the **soldiers club and had a game of billiards**. When Harry arrived, he soon looked me up and make himself known. We had lunch together and after had had changed his clothes we went for a walk. We walked, the search lights illuminating the sky, keeping a lookout for the **zeppelins**. In our wanderings we struck a jewellery shop and I **bought a wristlet compass** which was luminous for night use. It has a locking device to hold the needle tight so as not to strain it by bumps. I made back to Horseferry Road, catching a Victoria tram and dropped in at a place where they had strength testing machines, tried a punch ball and registered 150 lbs and then wended my way back to **sleeping quarters**. The room in which we slept was a very large place and is filled with beds. The mates were already in bed and I was not long falling asleep.

Tuesday 24 October 1916

When we woke the next morning we were feeling quite strange not to hear the reveille as usual. Had a good breakfast and then set out to see the sights. We first started at **St Paul's Cathedral**. At St Paul's found a great number of pigeons which were very tame and could be fed by hand. In this great and lofty structure we entered and saw the tombs of the great dead. **Wellington's tomb** is first seen and then **Major General Gordon** who died in the execution of duty to his country. Above the altar is a representation of Christ on the cross with a legion of angels flying around the Saviour's head. Around his feet are seen the Mother of Jesus mourning, also others in attitudes of sorrow. From there we went to **the crypt** which is about 20 feet below the level of the street. A guide showed us over the place and gave us information concerning the different tablets, tombs etc. The Tablet erected to the memory of Cruikshanks the "**cartoonist and illustrator of Dickens works**" was first seen. The stone above the last resting place of Williams, the founder of the Christian Endeavour movement was also seen. We then came to a tablet in the crypt erected to the memory of Cruikshanks who illustrated a lot of Dickens works. The great carriage or wagon on which was built to carry the **remains of Nelson** to his last resting place is also in the crypt, having been taken to pieces and then put together, again down in the crypt. It is very beautiful piece of workmanship and is **made entirely of bronze from the guns captured** by this great sea Lord. It weighs about 18 tons and was pulled by 12 horses. An amusing thing was noticed by a very old resident who was a small boy at the time when the remains of Nelson was carried to its resting place. When the huge affair was being pulled through the streets they had to go down a rather steep incline and

the services of all the fat policemen were taken and they sat back in the breeching by means of a rope and helped to steady the pace a bit. In the memorial service there were 12,000 people in one vast crowd. We also saw the **memorial to Lord Roberts** and the flowers put there by the Indians who had visited the cathedral. They are very proud of Roberts. There was also a **tablet to the memory of Sam Browne** after whom a belt is named (*a wide belt supported by a narrower strap diagonally over the right shoulder*). There was also a tablet to the memory of the **Lady of the Lamp** for whom everyone have a great respect for if she had not been so heroic things would have perhaps be worse in the nursing line for soldiers than it is today. This day was the anniversary of Battle of Trafalgar and Lord **Nelsons monument** was covered around the base with wreaths. After looking around the crypt of the **cathedral we mounted the winding stairway which leads to the dome and library**. We saw some beautiful old paintings of the crucifixion by some of the old masters. From there we mounted to the balcony which runs around the dome. A fine view can be obtained from here. The people on the streets look like ants. We were not permitted to go right to the top. It is 627 steps to the very top. We then retraced our steps and a little distance and went inside the dome to the **whispering gallery**. It is about 60 feet across and by whispering close to the wall the voice is heard quite distinctly on the opposite side. I was a bit sceptical and so went around myself to talk to my mates who remained seated. The guide told me to give a cooee. He meant to whisper it but I gave a good Australian cooee which fairly made the welkin (*the sky, the vault of heaven*) ring and almost deafened my chums on the opposite side. The guide got a start as he thought he might get into trouble for allowing such a noise. I whispered quite low and they heard it distinctly on the opposite side. We then walked to the **Tower of London** which lays close by. Khaki is shown free, we were met by the old **beef-eaters** in their quaint costumes. They are veterans and have quite a number of medals on their chest. We were shown first over the **Bloody Tower** in which the two princes Arthur and Hubert were smothered and in which **Sir Walter Raleigh was imprisoned** for so long. It is a room where a great number of sad events have taken place. We were shown the apparatus which was used to lift the gate to keep any boats to come in from **the moat**. It is still in working order and the old oak is still good. From there we went to see the **Crown Jewels**. It was a magnificent spectacle, the diamond studded **crowns and maces** looking very beautiful. There was also exquisite work in gold. The famous **Koh-i-noor diamond** which is about the size of an egg now that it is cut was there fitted in a sword hilt. From there we visited the dungeons which are brightened up considerably by means of the electric light. When the prisoners were there hardly a ray of sunshine found its way in. There are numerous carvings on the walls made by some unhappy prisoners in the past. Some of them were very neatly done probably by some blunt instrument. We were then showed over **the armoury**. This armoury is believed to be the biggest in England. There was every description of armour worn by the knights of old. There was **horse armour**, Kings armour and pages armour. **Henry V111's armour** was seen which he used when he was so stout. It weighs about a hundred pounds. We passed out and saw a spot on which **Lady Jane Grey was beheaded**. It commenced to rain then and we went to see **Tower Bridge**. In peace time pedestrians are allowed to walk over the top bridge when the ships are passing through. We were not permitted to go up as **anti aircraft guns** etc are mounted on it. I stood on the centre of the bridge at the spot where the two great pieces meet. Heavy traffic cause the two separate pieces to move up and down. We caught a **tube train back to Baker St Station**. After tea we went to see **Madame Tussaud's** famous wax works. It would take a book to describe all that was seen there. It is a splendid collection and is a sight that no-one should miss seeing on a visit to London. There was a life size figure of Queen Mary standing on a platform or stage and she looked very natural. Beside wax work there was trophies of different occurrences which had taken place. There was a piece of a German shell which was fired on one of the English sea ports at the beginning of the war. It decapitated a coastguardsman who went

in his house to rescue his children. It showed the cap he was wearing very much cut about. I saw also the bath in which Smith drowned his last wife and the wax effigy of him alongside. No expense was spared to make this place up to the real top notch. They had the **pearl inlaid piano of a great German composer** there. I ran my fingers over the keys and found it a bit out of tune. It would take a long time to describe all that was seen. There was a head of Marie Antoinette, the figure of the last King of France and his wife who were guillotined and a model guillotine. One could spend a whole day in this place. We returned to the A.I.F. Club in Horseferry Road and had supper before retiring. I had a bed in a different room to my mates as mine was booked. I slept that soundly that I never woke until 11.00 the next morning.



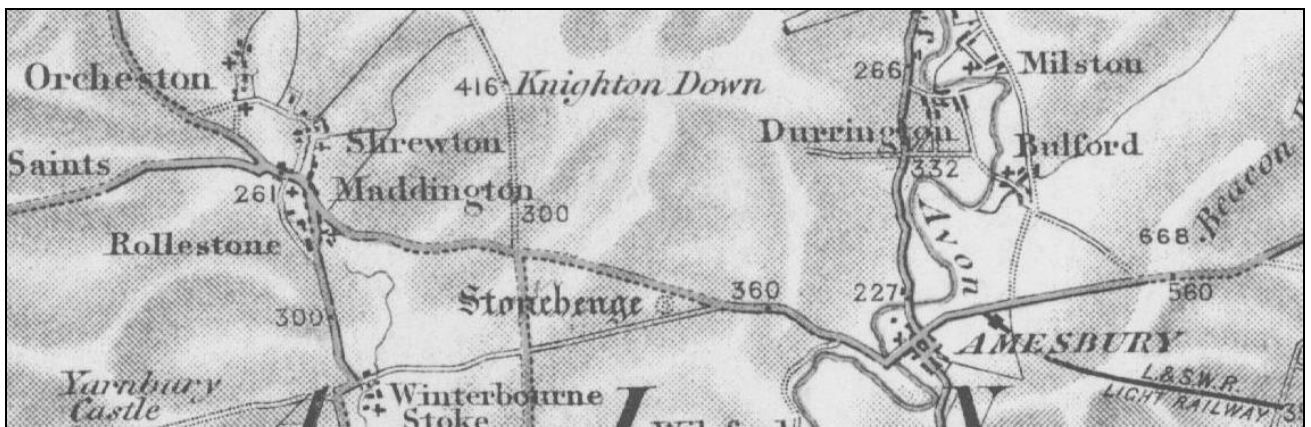
Wednesday 25 October 1916

When I awoke I was very surprised to see the time. My mates had gone so I went for a **walk to Regent St.** Riding part way on the bus. I saw the **Marble Arch** which is a pretty monument. On my ramble I saw a house in which one Duke used to reside, but is now used as a hospital. **Had tea at a beautiful restaurant called the Corner House**, with a string band in attendance. The food was a change to camp fare and would rather tend to upset. I bought a leather waist coat which I have no doubt will prove useful in the trenches. In the evening I went to a cinema. When I came out I saw a young man who was just knocked down by a motor bus. He was badly stunned and the police were soon on the scene. I walked through **Piccadilly and Leicester Square** getting in a tube near **Trafalgar Square**. Before retiring I called at a place where they have punching machines, weight lifting etc. I made the punching machine register 450 lbs and lifted 650 on the lifting machine. There was quite a variety of strength testing machines there. When I got to the A.I.F. I had a talk with a couple of the wounded lads. One had got a bullet right through an inch above the heart. He said it felt like a red hot needle. Another had one through his leg. When I got to bed, I found my mates had already retired. I was not long in getting into dreamland myself.

Thursday 26 October 1916

Today is our **last day in London** for some time at any rate, so we put in as much time as possible. We rose at about 7 and had breakfast and then set out to see **the Kings stables**. It was situated close to **Buckingham Palace**, so we had a look at this fine old building. Before reaching the gate one comes to a very large **statue** of the good old **Queen Victoria**, who was loved so well by all. It is done in marble and has other figures around it. Two of which appear to denote industry and agriculture, with a lion standing by the side of each. We passed by the **sentry who guards the gates** to keep all out except the privileged few. We went from there and made an appointment to look over the Kings stables. As we had plenty of time before we would be allowed over the stables we took a walk around that part of the town. In going up one street we noticed a **woman blowing a whistle** which I learned was for the purpose of calling a taxi. We found ourselves in a fashionable quarter and noticed the **very short skirt worn by even the middle aged lady**, We went to see the museum and spent a very enjoyable couple of hours. In this **museum** we saw Lord Kitchener's diamond studded sword. A saddle used by Blucher at the Battle of Waterloo. A complete miniature of the Battle of Waterloo which was about 14 x 10 ft. It showed the ground in the hills and valleys, the guns and soldiers complete. It is a very interesting sight. There was a number of tom toms or native drums and every type of gun from the very earliest period some of which are very crude indeed. Some of the guns which the soldiers had to carry must have weighed about a cwt. There was a crossbow and the bow and arrow used by the ancients. Every kind of armour was there. Guns from the Spanish Armada etc.

We were shown over the **Kings stables** by some of the grooms and found that the horses were in as good quarters as a great number of people live in. Everything is up to the T. The blacks were there. We were unable to see the greys as they were sent to a different place when the war broke out. The **harness used on the horses** was very beautiful and takes a good deal of looking after. We were shown the late **King Edward's charger** and the **horse that King George** rode at the review of Australian troops on Salisbury Plains. His name is Delkin and I patted him on the neck. He is a docile animal. After which we were shown the **state coach** which weights several tons and is a fine piece of workmanship. It never goes at more than a walking pace. It is beautifully sprung. There is oil painting on the panels by some famous painter. We were also shown a **sleigh used by the late Queen Victoria** when she was a girl in Scotland. We then went back to A.I.F, collected our parcels and set out for station. We called at **Union Jack Club** for soldiers and sailors and found several more of our mates. Had to wait a while for the train. When we got on board we all settled down for a sleep. I got down on the floor and we were soon asleep. When we got out at **Amesbury** we felt the cold coming off the plains. We warmed up by the time we reached the camp which was about 3 o'clock. It commenced to rain soon after our arrival and kept going just about all night. The lads who did not go from our hut, had our beds made ready for us to get in our return.



Chapter 9 Training again after 4 days leave

Friday 27 October 1916

I will go on to tell **of how I feel after the 4 days leave**. Terribly tired this morning but fortunately there was no morning parade. It commenced to rain in earnest and the **day was put in at fitting our equipment**. It is very necessary to have everything fitting to the T, as chafing will result. We had to pack our pack in march order. On the subject of packs we have 3 different orders. **Marching, drill and fighting orders**. In **marching order** everything has to be on the equipment with the pack loaded. There is no slumming in forcing the things in either. In the pack we have to cram, 1 shirt, 2 pairs socks. 1 singlet, 1 towel, 1 pair underpants, a hold-all containing brush, razor, tooth brush, shaving brush, housewife, piece soap, overcoat and waterproof sheet. The water bottle has to be full. The small bag carried on the left contains **knife, fork and spoon and iron rations** which are carried as a precaution if one gets cut off. The food is a concentrate, being the maximum of strength with the minimum of weight. From the belt at the back is carried the light trenching tool. On the left side suspended from the belt is carried the trench tool handle and bayonet and sheath which is made of leather. In addition the rifle has to be carried which makes a very fair load altogether. **Drill order** is less and **fighting order** is as light as possible as only trenching tool, water bottle and ammunition is carried. We were all glad today that we did not have to go on a march as we were all tired after so much walking in London. Had **dinner of bread and cheese and jam**, which was a return to earth after the fare in London. Our appetite had been unimpaired by the trip so we got on alright.

Saturday 28 October 1916

Had **light drill in morning**. Got our **new rifles** which we will use at front. After dinner I wrote a letter to Clem and went for a stroll with mates to **Durrington**. We found a kind of **Aunt Sally affair** there. Pipes had to be knocked down with balls made of woods, Alec Pasfield got 4 down with 3 balls. 3 a 1d was the charge and a packet of Woodbines for a prize. There was 3 of us and **none of us smoked**. By the time we left we had 27 packets of cigarettes between us. We had supped at a C of E reading room which we enjoyed. The walk back was rather dark but we got on alright.

Sunday 29 October 1916

Raining very heavy when we awoke and continued so that there was no church parade. At 11o'clock I went to **hear Miss Mary Booth speak at Salvation Army Hut**. She had a beautiful face and spoke in a refined voice which held ones attention. I had the pleasure of shaking hands with her. Continued writing in afternoon and in the evening walked to **Bulford**. It rained all the way there. I expected the Wesleyan church would be open but there was no service, so my mates and I returned to the no 1. Y.M.C.A. and heard an address from a worker then retired for the night. I omitted to mention yesterday that **Pasfield, Kilsby and I had our photos** taken together at a little studio not far from camp.

Monday 30 October 1916

When I went on parade this morning **my name was called** and I was told to report to a tent as **I had to go in for sniping**. Spent morning in putting up a snipers post. It is interesting work and calls for a good deal of ingenuity. In the afternoon we had some practice on the miniature range sniping a very small figures at a good distance to get used to sniping. Wrote letters this evening and **packed up Christmas cards** for home.

Tuesday 31 October 1916

Went on physical exercises in morning – **had bayonet exercises**. After breakfast I went with the **snipers** again. The provisional corporal. is a very tall good natured chap called Ben. He could be appropriately be called Big Ben. Built some more snipers positions, had a **lecture on the rifle** and gained some valuable information.

Wednesday 1 November 1916

Went for a run yesterday morning and came back feeling very warm as I was unused to it. Thinking of going in for a 7 mile run which is coming off Saturday. I **want to visit my cousin in Bristol**, Saturday, if I can get leave. After breakfast we went out **and built a different type of snipers post** to get onto the enemies position which would be frequented often. It took us all the morning and we had to use our own discretion in the making of it as we will have to it on our own at the front. In afternoon we had a lecture in the Battalion dining room as it was too wet to go out on parade. It was very interesting and we were particularly instructed in the care of the rifle. This being our one weapon of defence and destruction. In evening had another sprint and put the gloves on with a room mate and then had a hot bath.

Thursday 2 November 1916

Went for another sprint this morning and came back perspiring freely. Had a hot bath and then breakfast. After breakfast we had a bit of **practice with the prismatic compass**, it is very handy knowledge and will be most likely useful. Had great joy today as I **received 1 dozen letters**, 13 in fact which is my lucky number.

Friday 3 November 1916

After breakfast we had to come out on **parade in fighting order** to go on a route march. We started away and got about 2 miles away when it commenced to rain. We gained a bit of shelter in some big buildings which are situated out past the **Bustard Hotel**. We had our dinner there and then started for home. It rained all the way back and I got wet through before our arrival back in camp. We all changed our clothes and cleaned our rifles, they are new and like all new things get looked after well for a while. Got a letter from Doug , Edgar Burgess, Roy Woods and a lot from home.

Chapter 10 On leave to Bristol, Radstock and Hemington

Saturday 4 November 1916

The snipers were to go on field practice today and as it would interfere with my leave, I asked for exemption from parade from Lieutenant Gilpin. It was granted and I cleaned myself up and had a **shave in preparation to going to see my relatives at Bristol**. I was unable to get away until after dinner, I took a car from **Lark Hill to Amesbury** and then caught a motor bus from there. The bus arrived at **Salisbury** just in time to **catch the Great Western to Bristol**. I was not long getting aboard and then the train carried me, at not a very great rate to Bristol. On arrival I found that the rain was coming down fairly hard. I took a taxi and was soon at Cousin Jesse's house in City Road.

(J.J.Humphrys 45 City Road Stokes Croft Bristol). My cousin's wife was expecting me and saw me before I had time to note the number. I went in and Jesse was there and gave me a warm welcome. Tea was soon ready and **Marion**, his daughter, was introduced to me. She is not unlike **Harry** and is a big girl for her age. He has another son called **Jesse**, who has been a sufferer in his infancy and he has not grown very quickly. I also met his wife's mother, who is bordering on 80, is a very lively woman indeed. There was plenty to say about Australia and the camp. After tea, cousin **Jesse took me to have a glance over the town** as in the morning we would not have the opportunity as we intended going to see some more of the Humphrys tribe at **Radstock, which is near grandfather's birth place (Jesse b1835)**. He showed me some places which were

interesting although it was dark to gain any idea except the shape. We passed over a corner of the street and my cousin said that he could remember when the river flowed through there and a draw bridge had to be lowered to allow the traffic to cross. It is all covered now and the river flows underneath. We board **an electric car** and set out for the **Clifton suspension bridge** which is a very famous structure. The centre of the span being about 370 ft from the **River Avon** which flows beneath. We followed the level of the stream along until we were almost level with the bridge which appeared like a big rope in the sky. We alighted from the car and went to a lift which is not a perpendicular rise, but is like a very steep railway track. The car is drawn up by hydraulic power. On arrival at the top we went to the bridge. Unfortunately it was raining as well as dark, and so we could not get the view that I should like to have obtained. My cousin informed me that up to date 28 had gone **over the bridge in an attempt to commit suicide** in some cases they were successful, in others they were not. One lady jumped over and her crinoline **skirts acted like a parachute** and let her down with a great deal less violence. Bristol was the home of John Wesley and Queen Victoria used to stay there. I returned to the home of my cousin again and I found several more of their relations who had come to see me. Harry's sweetheart came around and a very enjoyable evening was passed with conversing of Australia, camp etc. The **piano was brought into action** and Harry's intended having a good voice. Things went smoothly. It was midnight by the time I retired.

Sunday 5 November 1916

I was awakened next morning and found breakfast waiting me. I had a good breakfast and cousin **Jesse and his son (Harry) and I** said goodbye to the family and started off on foot to **catch a train to Radstock**. I said goodbye for I thought maybe I would not be able to come back that way as trains were not running at suitable times. It rained all the way **to Radstock** and when we got out at the sleepy little station there was no one to meet us as we discovered subsequently that the relations had not got my cousin Jesse's letters informing them of our intention to visit them. It was a **3 mile walk** and the rain peppered down. (*Hemington is 3 miles from Radstock..NB*) We were soon wet through in spite of coats. We got to the little village at last where my **grandfather's brother still lives (Thomas b1828)**. He is about 89 years of age and is very feeble. His daughter keeps house and looks after him. I was told that the old man lived in **his thatched house** up to a short time ago. It was very old and the roof of the back soon fell in. Despite this, he refused to leave the old place. Things got so bad that one day **when it was raining he was sitting inside with an umbrella up to keep the rain off**. After that they managed to get him away. We did not stay many minutes as we wanted to **visit a couple of his sons** places and also to change our wet clothes and dry the damp ones. We called at one and he gave us each a change of clothes. They were all **eager to hear about Australia** and listened with interest to the description of **machinery which is used on the farms in Australia**. Had dinner and felt very much more comfortable than we did when the rain was soaking in. When the clothes had dried sufficiently I changed back to the Khakis and went round to the little Primitive Methodist Sunday School. One of **Uncle Joe's** sons being the superintendent. **I played the organ** and helped to sing. After Sunday School came out, I went around with another of Uncle Joe's **grandsons** and had tea with them. The lad is called **Arthur** and has a brother called **Hubert**. He and his brother are very nice lads and **work in a colliery** in which their **father is foreman**. I had to tell them a lot about the land which lies so far away and as much of my grandfather (*Jesse Humphrys b1835*) as I could. At about 6 o'clock, Hubert and I walked to the railway station to catch a **train back to Amesbury**. I bid goodbye to the folk and **cousin Jesse**, as he had to catch a different train and I was going a different route. The walk to the station was through some very pretty woods and on our right was some big grounds walled in by some big landlords who preserve their land for hunting. Had to wait a few minutes at the station for train and **Hubert expressed his desire to go to Australia**. He said he would like to see

the land which held so much promise. On the arrival of the train I bid goodbye and in a few minutes I had to **change at Westbury**. I changed at 3 stations before I arrived back to camp in the small hours of the morning.

Chapter 11 Training continues after leave in Bristol

Monday 6 November 1916

Awoke feeling fairly tired after my weekend leave. There is no early morning parade and after breakfast we fixed up ready for a march to the **Bustard trenches**. We were in readiness to start when word came that we had to march for the new lot of reinforcements. We changed into our blueys and took our equipments off. We marched all day in the cold at the **rifle butts** (*a Rifle range backed by earth embankments*). The ground being wet at the rear of the trenches caused the mud to splash when a bullet struck the mound and we were soon getting blobs of mud on us.

Tuesday 7 November 1916

Our sergeant asked for **volunteers to dig a grave as a man in the 43rd Battalion had died of meningitis**. Two lads, Pat Hart and Lambert and myself went. We had to go 10 miles so a **horse transport was used to convey us and picks and shovels**. They are not very easy means of locomotion. It is like two carts or drays one behind the other. Of course there is no springs so we had a very jerky ride. We went through a New Zealand camp and then to the **Tidworth Barracks camp**. It is a well laid out camp, with brick houses two storey high all over. There is a fine soldiers home built by the Wesleyans there. It is not unlike a castle and looks very comfortable from the outside. We found our way to the cemetery and the caretaker marked out the grave and we commenced to dig. The rain began to fall and it rained just about all the time that we were digging. We had to dig the grave 6 ft deep. It was in chalky ground so the digging was easy. There was several **more Australians buried in this little cemetery**. One could help feeling that it was sad that they should be cut down without the opportunity of striking a blow for the cause. After completing our task we had a **drink of tea and ate our bread and cheese** before starting for camp. We brought a foxhound back with us from the caretaker which had remained behind from a party of Australians who had been there before. We got back just at dark in time to have tea with the rest of the boys.

Wednesday 8 November 1916

Had a 1 mile march to practice keeping in communication with each other in **trenches**. It was rather cold and we had to file into the trenches and not lose touch with each other. Pass messages along by word of mouth and by letter. We had dinner and 2 or 3 carts appeared with apples and cakes to sell to the Australian tourists. After we had a practice at this we had **bayonet exercises** to warm us up a trifle. We then started for the camp arriving at about 5 o'clock.

Thursday 9 November 1916

Had to do **bayonet exercises** in morning. The charge is a lively bit of work with fixed bayonets. We had to run as hard as we could and endeavour to run the bayonet through a card board ring held on the end of a stick by the instructor. I got up so much pace one day that I had to drop my rifle to retain my own balance. The bayonet looks very dangerous weapon when it gets flourished about by a capable man.

Friday 10 November 1916

We were taken **on fatigue** this morning. A party of about 40 had to adjourn to the Divisional Q.M.S. (*Quarter Master Store*) and straighten up the store and **help load a couple of motor transports**. Rifles also had to be counted and branded in boxes. The

two loads of goods were taken to Tidworth (*barracks*). On their return we had to unload them as they brought back a load of gear etc. We got a box of books and papers from the store to take to our quarters. We were marched back in the evening and received 8 Australian letters. **Volunteers for cleaning up a company's dining room** was called for and I stepped out, but did very little as the place was full of helpers and wanted to read the news from home. **Harry Humphrys** came around to see me just as I was going to tea. He has been **transferred from Grove Park to Lark Hill** and I was pleased to see him again and we will have a look around when I get time. I made arrangements to meet him on Sunday. The **concert in the evening** was a success. The party were very good performers. One of them being a splendid banjo player and another a ventriloquist. **The ventriloquist** had a very up to date dummy which he could make wink and smile and open his mouth when speaking in a very life-like way. The man could throw his voice without moving his lips in the least and could make the dummy sing. One clear piece of work was to make the dummy sound quite muffled when he put his cap over its mouth. Some of the jokes were good. One was "The **regimental pet** of a battalion was a big dog and one day something excited him and we went woof-woof, and the whole battalion formed fours". The men fairly roared at that for that is very much like some of the officer's orders. The **banjo player** received a great encore.

Saturday 11 November 1916

Had to **come out for inspection with full pack**. Had to fit our packs and look through our new **gas helmets** to see that there was no defects anywhere. We also have a type of goggles to be used when the shells are being fired by the enemy. A gas helmet has to be taken great care of for it is as good as an armour in its functions. About ½ dozen breaths of gas is quite sufficient to settle any man for a long time. We were dismissed at about 1 o'clock. I did not stay for dinner but **set out for Amesbury to catch a train** to go and see Mr Pressey, who lives at **Sandleheath**. I was too late to catch a train so caught a bus to **Salisbury**. Had to wait an hour for a train to **Fordingbridge** which is about a mile from Mr Pressey's people's home. Had a look around Salisbury while waiting for train to take me to Sandleheath. Had a look at a book stall and saw Shakespeare's works in 3 volumes illustrated for 10/6. Caught train and passed 2 small stations before arriving at destination. The friends were having tea on arrival and I was given a hearty welcome by the old folk and Bob Pressey. Went to see a friend of theirs called Zebberdee and saw Miss Newman, a sister to Mr Newman who came out from England with Mr Pressey. Had to **catch the 1.40 train back to Salisbury** so did not have much time. On returning to Salisbury had a cup of tea at Wesleyan room for soldiers. Ran across Mr Hall who is just about a mile from our place when home and his brother-in-law. They are in the 27th Battalion and expect to sail tomorrow. Caught a train back to **Amesbury** and had a yarn with a young **New Zealander**. He was telling me about New Zealand and of an incident that occurred to his uncle. He was going along the back of a river when he noticed a girl was caught in the rapids. He sprang in and rescued her from a watery grave. She was a ¼ cast Maori and after a time he married her and she has proved a very fine woman. He said that there is only about **40,000 Maoris in New Zealand and that 5,000 have enlisted**. He said also that they are very proud when they get into their uniform and they consider themselves made men. I found my way back to camp and retired feeling a trifle tired. We expect to leave for France very shortly.

Clarence's Diary Book 3

Sunday 13 November 1916

Went to church parade in morning, after dinner wrote a few letters and waited for cousin **Harry** who has been transferred from Grove Park London to Lark Hill in **preparation for departure to France**. He bought a mate with him and we went to **Figheledean** and had a

look at the Village chestnut tree and Smithy. All leaves have dropped from the old tree, have it looking cold and desolate. We then went to **Durrington** and had lunch there. Found Pasfield and Kilsby there. Returned to camp feeling glad for the walk.

Monday 14 November 1916

This is the day on which the 3rd Division have a **route march** and no small affair it proved. The route lay through Amesbury then around past the old Stone Henge and finally back to camp. Had to do 15 miles in all **with full pack and gas helmets full water bottle, entrenching tool and bayonet**. A fair number fell out at different parts owing to recent colds and perhaps a blistered foot. The whole took about 3 hours to pass any point. The day was exceptionally warm for this time of year and perspiration was lost wholesale.

Tuesday 15 November 1916

Today we went to the **trenches at Bustard** to make an attack on an imaginary foe. I was put in as an engineer to clear up the debris after we captured the enemies trenches. A great calamity befell our platoon. A lad who was carrying the butter for our midday ration fell out before getting to our destination as he was tender footed. Fortunately I had bought a pot of strawberry jam, so my mates and I did alright.

Wednesday 15 November 1916

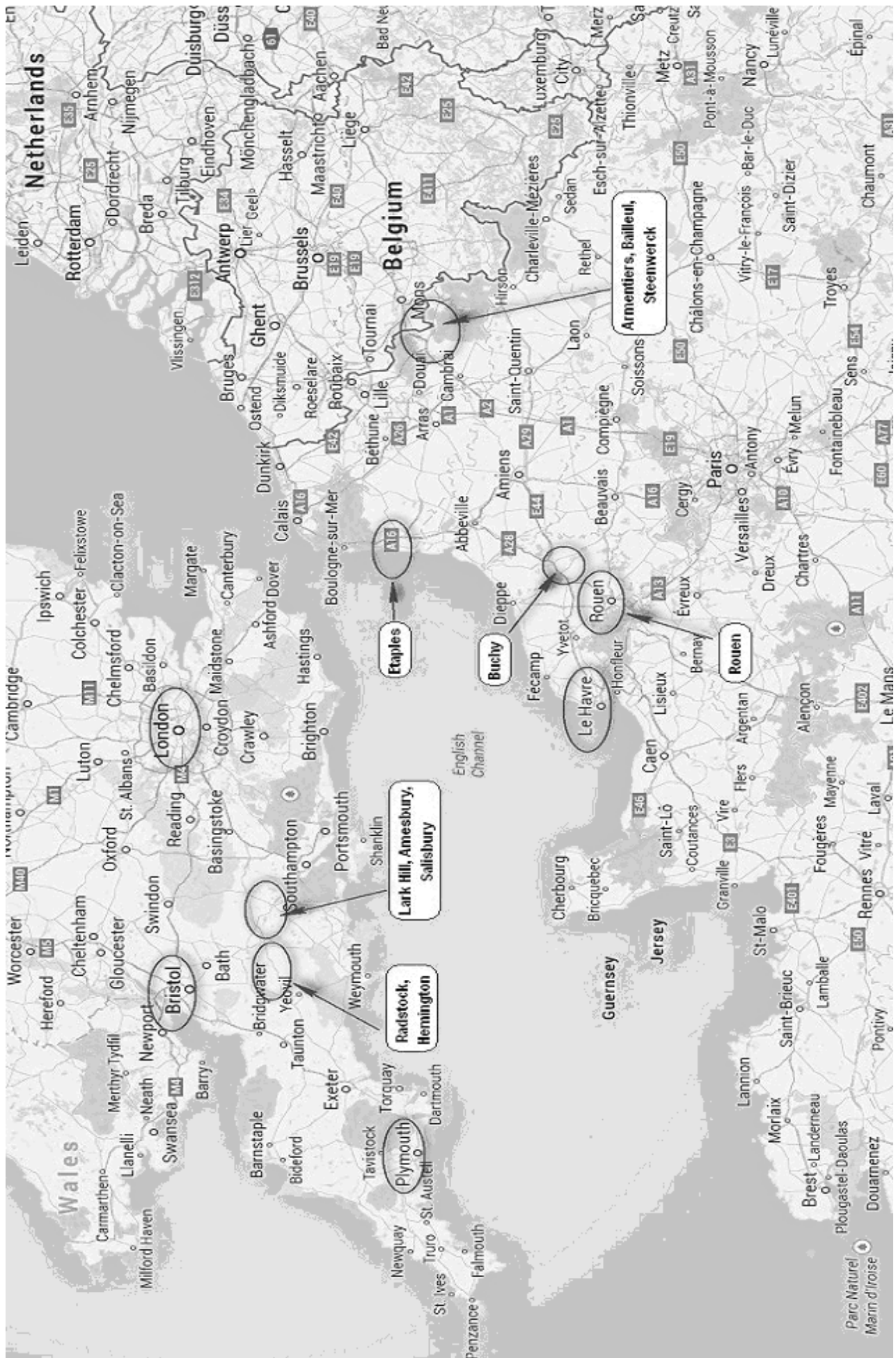
Went on **sick parade** with a cold and a blister on my toe. After breakfast attended a **lecture by Mr Gilpin on sniping** which was very interesting.

Thursday 16 November 1916

Went out with party to do **sketching and finding position on the map**. Went out to Stonehenge and stopped at different places and located positions on map. Took in turns to direct. In the afternoon we were inspected by the Imperial heads to see how we were progressing with **musketry** and then had to pack our kit bags in readiness to be sent to base in London. Intend sending mine to cousin Jesse Humphrys in Bristol so that I can get anything I want from them when at the front. In evening had a **game of billiards** with Harry and on returning to hut found a concert in full swing in which all the audience were performers. It **was to commemorate the eve of departure to the front**. Had to give a recitation and speech before I was suffered to retire.

Friday 17 - 24 November 1916

Went with the **party of snipers** and helped to construct a snipers hide. Mr Gilpin made us use our own ingenuity. In afternoon we were dismissed for some reason and I had a look at the remains of the Brigade headquarters which was burned to the ground just before dinner. The origin of the fire is not known up to date. It is believed a number of valuable papers have been burned. Sent a wire to Stan Nicoll whom I was made acquainted with on board the Seang Bee. He being in the 3rd 5th Pioneers and I in the 3rd 50th. In evening **attended a concert** which was not quite a success as the party from Bristol did not appear. Some of the lads rose to the occasion and gave a few items which were appreciated. Medals were given to the successful runner on Saturday last, later the performers came and a splendid time was put in listening to the good performance. Nothing of much importance occurred before **getting ready to embark for France**. Several days were taken up in the preparation as the divisions were on the move. We had to pack our haversack cram full, carry 150 pounds of ammunition in the pouch so which are for the purpose. Iron rations had to be carried in the valise on the right side while on the top of the pack was placed 2 rugs and a water proof sheet. This with water bottle full and rifle made a tidy load. We called ourselves the camel corps.



Chapter 12 Leaving for France

Saturday 25 November 1916

We **bid farewell to Lark Hill** and started for **Amesbury station** to board a **troop train** to get a little nearer the firing line. We all felt tired by the time we got to the station with the load up. The train was waiting and we boarded and were soon being carried to where we had to wait about 2 hours while stuff was being **loaded on the ship**. We had some **coffee** and when the troops were embarked **I was put on guard** to prevent any troops leaving the ship. I was a bit tired and rested against the gangway. The Colonel was nearby and asked me what I was there for. I said "to prevent the troops from leaving the ship sir". "Oh I thought you was there to keep the gangway up", I got off then. After I had been on for about an hour, I was relieved by another guard. I was on board about 10 minutes when there was a cry of "**man overboard**". I went to the side and found that the guard had stepped over the wharf into the sea. The light was very deceiving and it was hard to see that the boat was not lying close to the wharf. He had by some means retained his hold on his rifle. Having his overcoat on he was no light weight. Fortunately he had his life belt when he went over and he never struck anything during the descent. He was hauled back on board by rope and was taken down to the engine room to dry. His clothes were dried and he was given a warm drink. We soon made a start and I laid out my blankets and Pasfield and I had a sleep until 11 o'clock. We were then awakened to go on guard at the entrance to the engine room. When we got to our feet we were nearly thrown down again by the roll of the boat. **We were well out in the channel** and we were experiencing a rough passage. All was darkness on board as a light might be seen by a German submarine. The boat was **travelling at about 20 knots** and she had a great roll on. It proved too much for me and I became seasick. There was a good number of tommies on board and they were nearly all ill also. One big wave struck the boat which sent all and sundry spinning across the decks. I managed to grab a doorway while Pasfield finished up in the corner of the deck. There was quite a clatter for a while. A number made a rush for the upper deck as they thought the boat was going to sink. When it was time for me to **be relieved the next guard** was too ill to do so, so I had to endure it a little longer but was allowed to leave after a while. I got back to the rugs on the top deck and was just about asleep when I discovered that the waves had reached the decks and the rugs were starting to get wet. I took them to another part where the packs were stacked and spread them out there. I found the guard who was to relieve me there shivering as he had not unpacked his rugs. I got up a bit close and we shared the rugs.

Sunday 26 November 1916

I went on guard again just before breakfast while we lay at the wharf at (*left blank*). The drink of hot tea was greatly appreciated by all. We disembarked and I **saw my first sight of France**. We **marched through the streets** with our 120 lbs load and the rain and hail descended. We were wearing our overcoats with the leather coat over it which was issued a few days before leaving England. We had 2 rests in about 4 mile march. A good number of the lads fell out in an exhausted state. **One lad fainted**. We stopped at an enclosure alongside a catholic church and had our **meal of bully beer and biscuits**. We halted for about an hour and then we started again for the rest camp which we marched at 3. We were shown to our tents where we had to stay overnight. We soon got rid of our packs and set out to find a place to have some hot tea. Had a meal at the Y.M. and then had a wash and went to bed. **There was about 15 in a bell tent** so we had very little spare room. The **rifles were all stacked around the tent poles**.

Monday 27 November 1916

We were awakened early next morning and had a few minutes to draw our rations before starting **on the march again**. We had about **2 miles to go to the station** and arrived in plenty of time. We were put in big square covered (*train*) **trucks used for carrying milk etc in Australia**. It was some time before we were all ready and then we started. There was about **40 in each truck**. There was very little spare room. We had shutters which we could let down to have a look at the country that we were passing through. It started to rain and some came through the truck. We had **bully beef and biscuits for each meal**. When night came on we drew up at a station where we had a dixie of hot tea. There was a receiving station for patients and 2 nurses in a little place nearby. They said that **we would be near a part of the firing line** at about midnight. We boarded again and the train steamed off again. We tried to settle down for a sleep and it was a very difficult task as the truck seemed to have very strong springs and the joints of the rails were very bad. They gave the back a jerk every time. I was packed so tight that I had to give a heave to turn over.

Tuesday 28 November 1916

When morning dawned, the lads soon stirred and had a look through the sides of our sumptuous car. We passed through several fairly large places. **Bully beef for breakfast, dinner and tea**. In the evening at between 3 and 4 we drew up at (*left blank*) We were marched from the station to the town where our **equipments were put in motor transports to be taken to our billets**. I went with one lorry to help unload equipments. The drivers had no orders of where to take the things but had to go to a road to await orders. The night was extremely cold and we waited over an hour for the orders to come through. Eventually the lorries returned to where they got the orders. Before reaching, **one of the lorries side slipped in a ditch**. It is a standing rule that if anything occurs to one or the other of the lorries, the others will stay and assist. I noticed the lorry behind mine stop and yelled out to the driver and he stopped and went back. The lorry was pulled out by one of the others. When we were on the way to the billets the same case slipped in again. The tommy drivers hooked a lorry by means of wire ropes to front and back and soon had it back on firm ground again. **On reaching our billets** the lads came out to get their equipments and rugs. Talk about a mix up. The roads were like soup and a lot of the kits whose owner was not about to claim them, were tossed down on the road. There were men looking for their things until midnight. Captain Phillips was working hard taking kits around to their owners. We were at last packed in the little **rooms which were built like square tents. We were packed like sardines**.

Wednesday 29 November 1916

We felt **extremely cold** in the morning. As it is only a makeshift of a billet there was no conveniences at all. We had to work in a ditch and break the ice first. Our toes felt as though they belonged to someone else. We were **taken for a march** which warmed up our toes very well. In the evening went (*left blank*) which is a **typical French town with its cobble streets** and tile roofs. There are a good number of **thatched houses** about also. There is a good assortment of silks and artistic postcards for sale in the shops. Real lace can also be obtained. This lace is hand made by a slow process but which is very pretty. What strikes one is the **great number of estaminets** (*small cafes and bars which sold beer*) or **beer shops** to be found. Nearly every other house appears to sell beer. Tea cannot be obtained. **Coffee and beer are the two principal drinks**. They will grind the coffee while you wait. The people are friendly and the majority have picked up a bit of English so shopping is not very difficult for the soldiers. We have had a lot of route marching and bayonet fighting everyday. We **stayed in these billets for about a week**. We were paid in French money. **We were paid 40 francs** which is equal to 33/4d. The heads value it at 28/8d which was a bit of a profit to us.

We were **shifted to another billet in a farm house barn** where we were very warm but crowded again. Went to (*left blank*) one night where I had a **good bath for a franc**. Then by an old cathedral they built in the year 1700. The streets are all cobbled and is hard on the ankles. In the new billets for 2 days and then in company with about 20 others had to **go on fatigue setting up horse sheds** for the Division. I was put on brick laying for the floor. It was very unsatisfactory job as the horses had trampled it up a lot.

Chapter 13 Labouring near Steenwerck France

Saturday 9 December 1916

Had to go to another job and doing the same work on Saturday 9th December which was out in the open. It was rather cold but not much time was put in as it takes us about $\frac{3}{4}$ hour to get to the job from our billet. I forgot to mention that **when were detailed for the fatigue we were shifted to another billet** in (*left blank*) where we were put in a room behind a boucher or butchers shop. It was a fine place to be in. Reminded one of home again with chairs and tables. The butcher is at the war and his wife still carries on the business during his enforced absence.

Sunday 10 December 1916

Had to go to work again on Sunday morning putting bricks in. Had afternoon off and wrote several letters. **In evening went to a shop and had supper with a friendly old chap.** He was trying to understand and I was giving him a bit of history of self by signs, sounds etc. During the evening the guns of both sides appeared to be very lively as flashes were lighting up the sky, like lightening and the roar could be heard intermittently for about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour.

Monday 11 December 1916

Had name taken for a new pair of boots as these were letting the water through. The roads are very wet and sloppy so wet feet are the order of the day, unless good boots are work. A number of the transports have **rubber boots which appear to be very effective in keeping out the wet.** Then went to the job again. While working saw **guns shelling a German aeroplane.** It looked a pretty sight to see the shells bursting all round it. It was very hard to distinguish the plane as it was so far up. I heard later that it was brought down. We can **hear the machine guns all day and night.** I am picking up a few French words which may come in handy.

Tuesday 12 December 1916

Went with 5 others of the fatigue party to **Battalion boot maker and had my boots repaired.** While there, there was **a light fall of snow.** I went to D Company's billet and got 8 letters for myself. There was a long one from father which was much appreciated also from the Methodist Ladies Guild informing me of forwarding of a parcel to myself. One from Lily Bishop (*of Hanson*) telling me of Clarrie's death (*16 Aug 1916 at Pozieres France*) of which I feel sad. **Helped with bricks** during the afternoon. A horse died in the yard and one of the horses created a little diversion by getting his rugs around his legs and kicking and bucking about for a while.

Wednesday 13 December 1916

Had an inspection of rifles by Lieutenant Martin who is in charge of the fatigue party. **Went out bricklaying again.** Weather being very good all day. In evening several New Zealanders asked the way to **Steenwerck railway station.**

Thursday 14 December 1916

Went on **brick job again** and found no material for bedding the bricks as the transports were not allowed to go near (*left blank*) as the enemy artillery were active and might open up at any moment. Germany is talking of peace terms but it is thought the allies are not likely to give them the terms they ask. **News of hunger riots In Hamburg** and 1,000 casualties among the civilians. Marched back to the Battalion quarters for pay. Coming back got feet wet as the **road was covered in water to depth of 6 inches** in places.

Friday 15 December 1916

Left quarters to do fatigue work for the morning. **Dried boots and socks by the fire** after the damping down of last night. After dinner walked to where I was bricklaying and told the men to come to the **Divisional baths** for a bath. Had a shave at a little place where a man and his wife lived. He was not too fast. His wife appeared to be suffering from asthma.

Saturday 16 December 1916

Bricklaying again. Bricks were very wet and cold to handle as they were dug out and replaced from another part of the job. The Colonel of the Engineers came and blew up the Captain of A.S.C for not supplying us with materials. He was not to blame as **the men had to go under fire to get the bricks.** A number of **aeroplanes were flying** at a great altitude. One was fired at and dived down in a spiral fashion.

Sunday 17 December 1916

Had to **go on bricks again.** Plenty of material on job today. Returned for dinner and then went for a stroll to **Nieppe** which is about 5 miles from Steenwerck. Saw a number of houses demolished by shell fire and the old cathedral which had been shelled also. The big pipe **organ was completely destroyed** and the clock was out of order. I climbed the stairway which wound round and round reaching the top where I gained the roof by means of a skylight. Found a loose nail on the roof which I brought away to send home. Brought also a piece of lead piping from the pipe organ and then walked back **and had tea at the estaminet.**

Monday 18 December 1916

Lieutenant Martin gave us an examination of arms. We of D Company were **put on the job of Steenwerck. Put on helping with timber** and in afternoon sent back to estaminet where we camped to peel potatoes etc for the cook who is not well.

Tuesday 19 December 1916

Out again **helping with bricks.** Very **cold all day. 33 degrees (F)** was the temperature and in the evening there was **a fall of snow** which did not last very long. I **walked to Battalion** Headquarters which was about 3 miles to see if there were **any letters.** Got 3 Chronicles and 4 Burra Records Also papers for the other lads in the fatigue party. Secured a registered letter from Mrs Smart with photos of Doreen. It is the image of the little darling. Bought some hand made lace from a girl where I had a cup of coffee. I saw her making the lace which is a very slow process. It is done with about 30 different reels of cotton.

Wednesday 20 December 1916

Same job. Very fine day and cold. Number of **aeroplanes up of both German and English.** Saw as many as 100 shots fired at one plane so far as I could see, not one was hit. The English shrapnel shell smoke is almost all white and the German is principally black. The English shells are high explosives.

Thursday 21 December 1916

Bricks again. The fatigue party get the tea for dinner from the A.M.C. cook house which is close to our job and took the tins over and the cook was getting the fat cut up for the **Xmas pudding**. Last night a Corporal working on the bricklaying was giving us a bit of interesting **information about the Boer War**. His brother was in it He told us how a Sergeant Major was shot in the back by a Boer woman. His brother was a corporal and the Sergeant Major and party stayed at the farm for the night. In the morning the Sergeant Major paid for the use of the quarters and said good bye and was just leaving the gate when the girl drew a revolver and shot him in the back. The corporal took charge and they tied her to the gate and riddled her with bullets. The Sergeant Major was loved by his men and she got a quick and just death. His brother was later shot by his own men. A party volunteered to go on scouting and were out when a party appeared and in the waning light they were taken to be Boers. The scouts fired and the corporal said one man fell and that was his brother. I thought it was sad. The **corporal previous to enlisting was a driver of electric trams in Adelaide**. He told us some of his experiences which were interesting. He spoke of his feeling when barely escaping running over a lad. The boy ran across the track and fell right on the rails. I swung the magnetic round and shut my eyes, he said and when I looked the lad was getting up 2 ft in from of the tram.

Friday 22 December 1916

Fatigue in quarters in morning and packed up some things for home. In afternoon **went to job of bricklaying** and saw one more aerial flights. One monoplane was flying overhead and descended in a spiral for a few hundred ft. Went to **baths in the evening** and got a change of underclothes.

Chapter 14 Moved to Front Lines near Armentieres France

Saturday 23 December 1916

Had to pack up everything in readiness **to move off to Armentieres**. The rain started and so did we. The battalion had about 2 miles to walk before reaching us. We joined our respective companies as they passed. I report to Sergeant, We had an **8 mile march in the rain and wind**. The wind was the strongest yet felt in France by me. It blew tiles off the roofs of several houses. **Armentieres** looks like a city over which the hand of death has stolen. Long streets with no sign of life. The usual **cobble stones** in the streets. We were taken to **our billets** which were very comfortable. It was a 2 storey building with big cellars beneath.

Sunday 24 December 1916

Called up early in the morning to do some **fatigue work behind the trenches**. We walked up a communication trench which hid us from the enemy. The guns were booming on either side. Had to carry sand bags until about 3 o'clock. We were then relieved by another party of fatigue men and we wended our way home again The **shells were screeching overhead** from our guns which are hidden from view of enemies aircraft. Fritz got closed back every time he tried to come over by our anti-aircraft guns. On our return to billets which was about a 3 mile march, I had tea and went to look at an old **cathedral which had been shelled by the Germans**. It was much knocked about but still bore traces of its former grandeur. Went to the Y.M.C.A. which has splendid accommodation for troops where we had a good sing song.

Monday 25 December 1916

Christmas Day. It is in the heart of every soldier that he will spend the next Christmas at his own home. This is the first Christmas experienced in the military. We go on duty just the same. War does not stop for any day. **We were given trench boots or gum boots** in

which one can walk in water above the knees without fear of wet feet. They are comfortable and warm. We had nothing of interest occur while working but on the way back Fritz sent 2 shells over which landed about ½ mile from us throwing up a cloud of dirt and smoke. A few of our party were within about 20 yards of it in a trench and fell flat on their faces and were unharmed. On the way out **I saw for the first time a victim** of this terrible war. He was being borne on a stretcher to his last resting place by 2 Stretcher Bearers. He was evidently killed by a shell and he was broken up completely. We were dismissed a little earlier on account **it being Christmas Day and I went to the cinema at the Y.M.C.A.** It was crowded and the pictures which were suited for the day were intermixed by songs from talent in the forces. After pictures went to the room where luncheon was given free to soldiers by the Y.M.C.A. I then wended my way to billet where we were to have some **Christmas pudding**. Before going there I went to a shop near by where the proprietor had an **out of tune piano**. This had been struck by fragments of a shell and was evidently suffering from shell shock. I had a talk with a Tommy Corporal who has seen service at Armentieres for some time. He said that before the Australians were sent to this front it was very unusual to fire a shot on either side. I have heard the same thing several times. There is **a canal between or by the trenches** in which he said the **Germans and Canadians bathed**. The Germans one side and the Canadians the other. He also said that between the trenches of the foes **was patches of vegetables** and that by using the periscope a piece of the notice "out of bounds" can still be seen in "**no mans land**". The English German picked their vegetables out of these patches for their dinner. At about 8 o'clock the tea and xmas dinner was served up. **I received a parcel** from Miss Linda Langely which had just arrived. It was most opportune arriving right on Christmas Day, after being transferred from the 3/50th. Only this morning I broke my boot lace and was wondering where I could get one and among the comforts I found 2 pair. We had as much as we could eat of **dates lollies, raisins and plum pudding**. We sang a few songs and made an attempt at some carols.

Tuesday 26 December 1916

Stayed in bed a bit late this morning as the party who went early yesterday have to go back again last today. The walk was longer this time as we had to go right up near the firing line. Had to **strengthen a dugout with earth**. We had to **work in the dark** and the ground was wet and sticky to shovel. So add to the discomfort it started to rain and we had to don our raincoat. The sky was **occasionally illuminated by a star shell**. We were kept from going asleep by the **machine guns and snipers** which were cracking very near. Our first casualty occurred a few days ago although the Battalion has not been in action yet. We left a little after 9 and got lost in the labyrinth of trenches. We got guided out subsequently by a runner. We arrived back tired out.

Wednesday 27 December 1916

Went on **sick parade** with a swelling on the instep caused by marching on cobble stones etc. Advised to put whale oil on it 3 times a day. Put on light duty for the day. Between the jobs I had a look around the place. In evening was **given a bit of German tobacco** secured by a lad in a raid on the German trenches on Christmas Eve. Went also to piccottes (*pictures*) at Y.M.C.A. which was very good.

Thursday 28 December 1916

Was **sent to help load transports** to be taken to the trenches. Had to work in early part of the morning and then we returned and another party was sent out. **Watched a bombardment of an aeroplane** which was unsuccessful to land.

Friday 29 December 1916

Had to **get things ready to go into the trenches**. We were to take a rug and the pack and felt hat to be stored at the quarter masters store until our return. I left some of my valuables at a little lolly shop.

Saturday 30 December 1916

Up at about three and the rain was pouring outside, rolled up our rug and water proof sheet. Put on equipment, overcoat and leather coat. We had a hasty breakfast and then we were **marched to the boot store** where we donned our **gum boots**. I got a pair about 3 sizes too big but succeeded in exchanging with one of another Battalion who was leaving the trenches. We were feeling a bit tired by the time we reached the trenches but we had to shake that off. On taking over the trenches some of the men were put on fatigue work in the support trenches. In the evening I was sent to a Sergeant where I was **put on a listening post** which was about 30 yards from the enemies trenches. To reach it we had to **go through water above our knees** in places at the same time making as little noise as possible. On reaching our post I had to assume a very cramped attitude and keep watch. We were about 3 hours for the first watch. It was quite lively enough for **our "baptism of fire"**. **The flare lights** were continually lighting up the sky, the machine guns were **whistling the bullets over head** like the singing of electricity. We were unmolested and returned in safety. When I got back to the dug out I found 3 other tired soldiers in it, so had to crawl about in the cold until the next watch which was about 1am.

Sunday 31 December 1916

The 2 chaps who were with me were sleepy and I had to jog them to keep them awake. Managed to get a bit of rest when I returned from the next watch. We were **next morning sent back to the support lines** where I endeavoured to get a bit of rest. There were no blankets to sleep in but I rolled up in my overcoat with a few dry sandbags underneath. I dropped off to a troubled sleep **and started to dream of home**. I thought I was by the sheep paddock dam with father and someone else and by some means a snake had fastened itself to my arm. I thought that it wouldn't let go and that my arm was quickly going numb. I thought that father said I would have to lose my arm to save my life. I awoke with a start to hear the guns roaring and that I had got my arm out on the cold boards which had quite numbed it, and hence the dream. The **tea is carried in quantities of about 9 gallons** in an appliance made on the Thermos Flask system which keeps the tea hot effectively. It is a very fair load for one man on the **slippery duck boards**. One **mate of mine has been killed**. I never knew until coming up to the trenches that it was him. He was killed about a week before **while in charge of a fatigue party**. The same shell killed a Sergeant Major and several of the fatigue party were killed or injured. The next day I was put in a bay and had a **periscope rifle** trained on a low part in Fritz trench. I had a couple of shots with what results I cannot say as I could only see the head and shoulders at a distance of about 300 yards. At night slept in subsidiary lines where we had a very good dugout and rugs. Up again early in the morning and returned to work. Had **patrol and sentry in the night**. One of our lads gave another of our chaps about a half an inch of the bayonet for not answering the challenge for the pass word. It appears that the lad was partly deaf and did not hear the sentry. There was a few cases where the lads got jumpy.

Wednesday 3 January 1917

On Wednesday night **I was put on a double guard**. Had to relieve 2 men at different bays. I packed up some sand bags first and then relieved a chap called Grey at one bay. About 2 minutes after the Germans sent over a couple of **"Minnies" (Minenwerfer - German Mortar)** which are a high explosive which is shot in the air and drops straight down burying itself in the ground and then exploding. It throws up a huge amount of mud

and earth. They landed on the opposite side of the trench and threw up a lot of wet earth over us. So soon as it landed I dropped down like a flash and then the roar of the bursting explosive soon came. A big blob of mud knocked off my helmet. At 1 o'clock I left Grey and relieved a lad called Philpot for 2 hours. At 12 o'clock I came off and **had some hot pea soup** which had been sent up. I had 2 hours off and repeated the performance which landed me to 4 o'clock. 8 hours on and 2 off. From there we returned to subsidiary lines where we had a sleep and wrote a couple of letters. In evening some mates had to go on a covering party in "**no mans land**" and **I had to carry up rations for the cook**. On the way up some bullets were whistling uncomfortably close to our heads. One of the lads said that good fortune had attended some of their chaps. It appeared that these was 4 dug outs in use and one in the centre was unused. A shell hit the unused one while the rest remained intact. On finishing the fatigue work I returned to subsidiary lines where I had a read of my list and went to bunk again. Slept well until morning.

Friday 5 January 1917

Packed up my blankets etc and **got everything ready to move out**. On the way out **we passed by a cemetery** which had suffered from shell fire. There is one huge monument there erected so far as I could judge to the **memory of certain soldiers of France**. It is a huge obelisk with names in gold lettering on either side. There is carvings of swords, cannons etc. It struck me as being almost appropriate that **these soldiers should still, even though dead, be in the midst of war**. The obelisk itself was shattered in places by pieces of shell. On our return to billets we had dinner and then put in my time writing letters at the Y.M.C.A. On **returning to billet in the evening** was agreeably surprised to find a package from home and one from Miss Edson.

Saturday 6 January 1917

Had to go on fatigue in the trenches in the evening.

Sunday 7 January 1917

Church parade in the morning in a C of E Club hut. **I played a piano for the service** which has seen better days as it was a very tuneless sort of an instrument. In afternoon had to go on fatigue

Monday 8 January 1917

Nothing to do in the morning so we **were put on a bath parade**. The baths were excellent. Had a complete **change of underclothing**. The bath was in a number of big wooden tubs holding anything between 2 and 300 gallons of water. Five or six could get in at once and of course the water was nice and warm. The water was disinfected frequently. Heard an amusing incident of a couple of our lads who were on a wiring party. They were in "no mans land" and one accused the other of cutting his barbed wire. They were going to settle it there and then with the bullets flying all around. I thought that showed **indifference to danger**. On another occasion our Lieutenant who is the son of the late Tom Price was following some of his men. The sentry seeing him in the rear mistook him for a mate of his. "Is that you Ealey?" he said. "No" said Mr Price "It's Pricey". In evening **helped to dig a fresh communication trench**. We were under fire and I tell you the dirt did fly. We were not long in getting down 3 feet which was the required depth. There is a clever way of concealing the work done by means I will tell you later.

Tuesday 9 January 1917

Nothing to do in morning for my sick boss, so **got a parcel ready to send home. I also received a mail** of 9 letters but was disappointed at not receiving any from home. Received a couple of cards. In the evening went on fatigue work. Had to **carry sheets of galvanized iron** out in open with bullets flying around. Had just got over a very awkward

ditch and a glancing **bullet caught one of my mates in the stomach**. Our corporal was there and we soon had his field dressing out and put some iodine on the wound. It was a bit jagged and the bullet had stayed inside. He took it very bravely and did not murmur. **We put him on a sheet of iron** and I shall never forget the job we had to get him back over the ditch. It was very difficult as one foot got stuck and there was only room for one at each end. The Germans sent over 5 shells which landed well behind us.

Wednesday 10 January 1917

Up at 3 o'clock and had **breakfast in readiness to take over the trenches** from another Battalion. Had to **help the cooks carry up dixies** as well as our own clobber which is a fair load at any time. On arrival at subsidiary lines had a rest and then sent back for more boots. As we were too early to get the gum boots I went to a Y.M.C.A. which was open in a building in the end of town nearest our firing line. It will be a great boon to soldiers going in and out of trenches as **they supply free tea at any time of the day or night**. Sweet biscuits and chocolates can be bought. We bought some bakers bread to take back to the trenches. We were **issued with some large trench socks** as well at the boot store which are as thick as 3 ordinary pairs of socks. They reach right to the knees and have a band and buckle at the top to strap it tight. On reaching the trenches we carried the boots to firing line where they were issued to the men who had none. In evening **carried coke up for the cooks** in the support trenches. Retired to bunk at about 7 o'clock and had a good sleep.

Thursday 11 January 1917

Awakened early in the morning **to relieve the front line**. Took over the bays etc and a part of the platoon was **put on repairing damaged trenches**. In evening put on detached bay where had to do fairly long hours, 1 hour observation, 1 hour sentry and then 2 hours patrol. I was in the lead on one patrol when I caught a sentry asleep, I woke him with a couple of touches of the bayonet and told him to give himself a shake and be considered himself very lucky it was not the officer of the watch that had caught him. In the morning we stood to readiness for the trench to be taken over by the next platoon. After stand down **we were taken back to the support lines** where we were put on fatigue work. I had to **carry the tea to the front line** in the patent thermos dixies. On my return I went to the subsidiary trenches and got rug and ground sheet and had a rest. In the evening was **put on as runner for a Lieutenant** and had to follow him around with rifle and bayonet in case he should be attacked. In the latter part of the night I returned to the firing line **where I was put on gas alarm** for 3 ½ hours. The gas alarm is a horn with a cylinder of compressed air to be used in case of a gas attack. That would be the order for all respirators to be donned.

Friday 12 January 1917

In the morning of Friday **we returned to the subsidiary** and found the dug out in bad condition as the rain had got through in some of them. Managed to get into a fairly dry spot and soon dropped off to sleep. In the afternoon Sergeant Charlton told me to report to Lieutenant Sully **to go out with the scouts to inspect Fritz wire**. I went over and saw the officer and he told me that I had to report around 10 o'clock (a.m.) on Saturday morning. I got my mates to wake me and was at the starting place in plenty of time. We donned Tommy tunics and put our woollen cap comforters on. **We got in the front lines and crawled** through a gap and out past our listening post. We continued out through the gap along an old ditch with the **ice cracking around us**. We came to 3 rows of knife barbed wire rests and crawled through an opening until we came to **a parapet in front of the Germans main barb wire entanglements**. The ground was very cold and the ice was cracking under our pressure. We were under the rifle shots of both English and Germans. Of course our chaps had orders not to fire into "no man's land" when we were

out. The sergeant in charge gave the signal to return after being out over half an hour. We **returned to the lines** and I went back to the subsidiary lines and polished up a shell nose cap, which I had picked up at the rear of our cook shop to send home. At stand to in the afternoon. I reported to Sergeant Charlton who was acting officer of the watch and was put on the right bay under Private Clarke. I had to do 1 hour at that night and **the snow as laying on the ground very thick**. We had to walk the duck boards to keep ourselves from freezing. **One of the nights it first froze and then it snowed and not satisfied with that, it rained**. One the day that were resting in the subsidiary lines we had **to cart bricks from a broken down house** so we had plenty of work.

Tuesday 16 January 1917

On Tuesday we went back to the supports and I **was put on carrying up the tea**. The cooks gave us a bit extra bacon and fried some bread for us. It proved a bit too rich for me and I felt sick all day. In evening I **volunteered to go out on listening post** and did 2 hours before midnight and 2 after.

Wednesday 17 January 1917

Early in the morning we were relieved by another Battalion and **we returned to our billets** in *(left blank)* Had a drink of tea at Y.M.C.A. on the way back. On our return we had breakfast and got everything ready for a sleep. Had a **shave and there was to be a bath parade** in the afternoon. There was a parade at 2.00 and I was called out to go to a **training school for raiders**. Had to pack up everything and was marched around in company with some others who had been chosen for this work. It is an attack on a small scale. We are to attack the German front line in places where he doesn't suspect it and bring back a prisoner if possible or machine gun etc.

Thursday 18 January 1917

Called at 6.30 to given **orders to go on bath parade**. It was welcome as we have not had the opportunity of a good wash for some time. We marched down and had to wait a while for another Battalion to finish. We rested by a **jute factory** which is in full swing making bags, canvas etc. There are a great number of French girls employed at the factory. Made a **snow man** while waiting and had some snow fights. We were then taken in the bath which was previously a big laundry. After a **good bath and change of underclothes** we returned to billet and had dinner. In afternoon **had bayonet instruction** by a sergeant who made us spring to it. In evening had a **supper of eggs and chips**. I was **paid the usual 40 francs**.

Friday 19 January 1917

Up at 6.30 and paraded for **physical exercise and then bayonet fighting** until dinner time. After dinner went on **route march** across the canal which has swollen since we first crossed it on our way to the town. We rested just on the other side by a jute washing factory. The weather was **extremely cold** and the fireman at one of the big boilers invited me in to the big fires. We returned to our billets later and I wrote a few letters at Y.M.

Saturday 20 January 1917

Breakfast consisted of **bacon and tea**. **Went on sick parade** with a few others with a slight crack on the heel and a cold which caused me to cough a good deal. Had my heel dressed and a mixture for my cold. On my return I found the lads listening to a lecture from the Captain.

Sunday 21 January 1917

Paraded as usual at ½ past 8 and taken for a **route march** and then had physical exercises alongside a rubbish destroyer. It is a fine large building and has many glass

windows, The frost has frozen the water fairly thickly in places. In afternoon had **bomb throwing practice**. In evening went on a **sing song and devotional service** at the Y.M. Reading room which was conducted by one of our chaplains. He spoke well and sent out an appeal to the lads to stand for their master. He asked anyone to stand in the meeting to show his intention of living for his Saviour. Several stood and in the rear several hands were uplifted to show their intention of reformation service. After service had a **supper of eggs and chips** and then retired to bed in billets.

Monday 22 January 1917

More physical exercises. Air very keen and tunes up ones ears. **The road gets very slippery and hard** from the constant freezing. The ice almost thick enough to bear some hopes of having a skate. In evening went to **cinema and Pierrot show** at Y.M. Before the programme started all of a certain Battalion were ordered back to their billets. It transpired later that their sector of the line was being **raided by the Germans who were repulsed**. The Germans came over with blankets up so they must have intended to stay. About **23 of our lads were killed and about 60 wounded**.

Tuesday 23 January 1917

Had a **long route march** which took us **past the cemetery**. They were **burying** a Colonel and Lieutenant and **several men** who had been killed by a shell yesterday. The bodies were buried in a blanket and a cross with a number marks his grave. Many a brave lad sleeps his last long sleep in that grave yard. Men who start these terrible wars must have a lot to answer for. It makes one think of the agony of the poor mothers, wives and children of the poor lads. Saw several **French lads having a skate on the ice** which has frozen hard enough to bear. On our return I took the opportunity during rest for dinner **to have a slide on a pond** situated near our billets. I found the ice very thick and slippery. I could slide about 30 feet. I got a bit too twisted and fell on my ear once but never sustained any serious injury. In afternoon had a bit of fun (or at least the remainder of the lads did) with a football while I put in my time on a slide with several more chaps I had a laugh at some who could not slide but fell when about half way and slide the rest of the way on their back. In evening went around to billets of the company but the lads had gone out on fatigue. **Had cup of coffee and bought a ring** which was supposed to be made from the nose cap of a shell.

Wednesday 24 January 1917

Out on drill again and the lad punctured the football on a hedge. In afternoon our Captain informed us that **we would have to go back to the company** who had gone into the trenches this morning. We packed everything in readiness and after tea took our pack to the quartermasters store and then continued to the trenches. On arrival at subsidiary lines we of 14 platoon were dismissed to our bunks for the night. After a while Fritz sent over several shells which burst well past us.

Thursday 25 January 1917

Rose and had breakfast and had a look at some of the **shell holes made by Fritz shells**. One had fallen right at the entrance to one of our communication trenches. Fortunately no one being there at the time. Another had lobbed in a pool of water and scattered large lumps of ice within a radius of 30 yards. **Carried some water over for cooks** from a pump in the morning and in the evening helped carry rations to the supports. The night was bitterly cold. The tea in the **dixie would freeze** in a solid lump in about 2 hours to the thickness of an inch. One had to put some water on his hair to part it the easier and before he could get his comb it was frozen and stuck his hair together. Couldn't help thinking how **strange that people were perspiring in Australia**.

Friday 26 January 1917

Rose before day break to **take over trenches** from our other platoon. We did not think as we raced about the duck boards in an attempt to warm ourselves. After even... (*I fell asleep just at this point woke up in about an hours time with pencil and book in hand—Clarence*).

After we had got ready we **marched to the firing line** and I was put on the right bay on observations. Had the job of the world to keep ourselves warm. The **temperature has been 20 degrees** several days (12 degrees below zero). Fritz was very quiet today and how the wind froze during the night. I seriously wondered what would happen when I got too tired to walk about. Had to go **on patrol during part of the night**. Had a bit of a doze once and woke with a start with feet like chunks of ice and coughing and sneezing like a fish out of water. Very glad when Saturday morning appeared.

Saturday 27 January 1917

The **Kaiser's birthday**. Expecting something to happen today but the sides have been very quiet all day. Got **a fire bucket** in the support trenches and we made a fire which was "tray bon", as the French say (*tres bon means very good in French*). Fixed up a pump which had frozen during the night. Had to take it all to pieces and chop the ice out. **Last night a lad in A company had got shot through the head** while on a covering party to a wire barb party. Another got the cramp in the stomach from laying in the cold. Have to go over the top myself tonight in a covering part for another barbed wire party. Trusting that we be favoured with better results than that company. Had some **Welsh rabbit for first time for dinner** today. Made by melting cheese and spreading it on bread. The bread has also been frozen and striking very cold on the teeth. The **ice on the pools is about 4 inches thick** now and is freezing by day and night.

Sunday 28 January 1917

Had a very good time on the covering party in no man's land. We were in an old trench in which the water was frozen over. The ice was very slippery. **I picked up a German bomb** which I hope to be able to send home. It is a concussion bomb with a timed fuse and has some German writing on it. It has a wooden handle by which it is thrown. It is loaded with toenite?. One of the lads took out the percussion cap so it will not exploded. Sunday morning had to **go on guard on the bayonet supports** and then had a bit of sleep before going back to the subsidiary lines. In the morning I **cleared the ice out of the pump from which the water** is obtained for the cook house. It was frozen solid in the rubber pipe and by bring a bayonet into play and some hot water I succeeded in getting it free. I had to go **on guard** when I was hauled out of bunk to take the place of a soldier in the front line who is also an M.P. He had to go to Headquarters. I put on my equipment and was going up the communication trench when I met Corporal Green who had been out with a wiring party. He informed me that their **wiring party** had been fired on. One poor lad called Tiny Gregory **was shot dead** and two more received wounds. They were fired on by a machine gun. One man had 4 wounds from the hip down. Another had a bullet through the neck and chest. I passed them coming down on my way up. The **stretcher bearers had great difficulty in carrying the wounded** as the boards were so slippery with ice and frozen dirt. The ice is too thick on the pools to drive a pick through now. I reported to the officer of the watch and took my position on the left bay. I wanted to get away as early as possible in the morning so arranged with one of the lads to do 2 shifts straight off. Being 8 hours altogether. I commenced with 1 hour observation looking over no mans land to see if Fritz was coming. Had to bob down every time a rifle or machine gun started. **One of the German machine gunners is a good shot**, he can skim the parapet every time so it is not advisable to keep your head up when he starts. On completing the 1 hour observation I had an hour at sentry. Had to stop everyone that

came along. My poor feet were so cold and felt like lumps of ice. At the end of the hours sentry I had 2 hours patrol. It was better than standing still but it was difficult to keep the balance on the slippery duck boards. Had four hours more of the same thing straight off and **then sent back to my platoon in the subsidiary lines, then returned to billets** on Tuesday morning. There was a raid further along the line and a severe bombardment by our guns and of course Fritz was not long in replying. He whizzed over a lot of rifle grenades which through a bit of dirt over me. Our trench mortars lobbed a few shells in Fritz trench and although they are 180 yards away a piece of it came back over our heads. Never felt very excited about it.

Clarence's 4th Book

Monday 29 January 1917

Returned to billets from the trenches feeling about as tired as it is possible to be. On arrival we had a bit of breakfast. I had to take my conglomerate of articles along to the Brigade school, where I had a shave and a bit of a wash. There was to be a parade at 2.00 but was cancelled as we could not have the **use of the baths**, then a walk back to the company and got a couple of letters, one from Mrs Smart and 1 from Nellie Atkinson.

Tuesday 30 January 1917

Went on sick parade with bad cold and weak ankles from walking on the slippery duck boards in the trenches. **Put on light duties** for the rest of the day. It was not as cold as it was some of the other days. After dinner I went around to see Pasfield who has been made the platoon quartermaster. The platoon had been having a bath at the Divisional baths. In the evening I went to the Brigade canteen and wrote a letter.

Wednesday 31 January 1917

In the morning we were **paraded with soap and towels for a bath. Had a few slides on the ice** while waiting for our turn for a bath. The river was frozen over and the shipping was held up by the ice. Had a good bath and after finishing went to a joint and had a **meal of chips and eggs**. On my return to billets we were taken to our usual parade ground. Had **physical exercises and the football** was sent going. Played with it for a while but I have an ingrowing toenail. I had a **slide on some ice** and my feet slipped out **and I fell** on the back of my head. It broke the skin and stunned me for a second or two. I turned over on my face and the blood started to run down over my face from the wound. A **stretcher bearer was soon in attendance** and put a bandage around my head. The put some iodine on my head first and then I walked back with them to the hospital where they shaved the hair around the wound. The doctor inserted **2 stitches**, after giving me an injection of **morphine** to deaden the pain. I felt no pain or headache at all and was quite able to walk back to the billets where I had my tea of oxo and marmalade. I am now writing in my diary so am not too bad.

Thursday 1 February 1917

Went on sick parade to have my head attended to. The doctor said it was getting on splendidly. Got pill and mixture for my cold and they had to report to the adjutant for having a wound which according to the military is self-inflicted. Fortunately it was not severe enough to put me in the hospital so the adjutant left the matter rest. **The (billet) Colonel and Lieutenant** are staying in is very fine. It must have been the residence of some rich man. Outside it has a very unassuming appearance but inside it is very pretty and artistic. On **appearing before the adjutant** I said I have been sent around by the doctor to tell you that I am unfortunate individual who had the fall on the ice last night. He started to smile straight away. "I feel no ill effects from it at all, right from the moment that I did it" I said and the doctor considered it of so little import that he never even put a

bandage over it again. He said it would be quite alright and I went back to my billet. In afternoon had a haircut, shave and wash for 7d. In the evening went to the Brigade reading and writing room and wrote 7 letters before retiring to bed.

Friday 2 February 1917

Very cold last night 15 degrees below freezing point. The **snow** looks very pretty as it is frozen and squeaks underfoot like a new pair of boots. Went on parade as usual and had some **bayonet exercises and physical jerks**. While in the midst our guns commenced to shell a couple of **German aeroplanes which were flying overhead**. The shrapnel commenced falling from the clouds around us, so we thought it advisable to get into shelter. Had a game of throw ball afterwards with results that we were warmed up.

Had golden syrup for dinner exclusive of meat and potatoes. In afternoon had a repetition of morning's programme. Went to the cinema which failed half way through on account of the water freezing in the pipes from the intense cold. We are told that we are not to go in the line this time with the company. Needless to say we are not sorry.

Saturday 3 February 1917

We have to go in the line after all. Given a couple of hours to pack up and get away from our quarters. Packed up pack and rugs and took it to the quartermaster store. Went down the street and bought a couple of loaves of French bread which is brown and plenty of crust but rather tasteless. **Everything is fairly dear over here** in the edible line. A 1lb tin of jam is 1/3d. Honey the same while eggs are 3d each. Had a short wait at Quarters Masters Store. We were then **marched in to join our platoons in the lines**. My platoon was in the subsidiary lines and Lieutenant Price took us there where we had dinner. In afternoon had a good wash in hot water and a little rest. In evening **carried up the rations to the supports**. Retired early so as to be fresh for the front line in the morning.

Sunday 4 February 1917

At 7.00 we moved up and **relieved the front line**. I was put on with Thiele and Meacham to guard the sap entrance. Had some **fatigue to do with pick and shovel**. The ground was as hard as iron and only little scraps would come off at a time which would almost always fly into the eyes or face. **Fritz sent over several pineapples**. Three at least were duds and were picked up by a machine gun corporal who crawled back over the snow and picked them up as they had fallen about 50 ft behind our front line. A pineapple as we call this grenade is of course similar to that fruit and is loaded with some powerful explosives. It has a tail piece made of galvanised iron similar to the toy windmills made by lads. The striker is inside and is operated by the grenade coming into contact with any substance. It is a percussion fragmentary. In evening was take off the sap and put on the left bay under Corporal Green. Had 2 hour shifts and 1 hour spell after each. **At about 11 o'clock while I was on sentry Fritz sent over several pineapples** in reply to our trench mortars which burst unpleasantly close to our bay. Two of 3 company patrols had just come along and we dived down out of the way of fragments. One piece struck the helmet of one of the patrols, went right through and hit him just above the eye causing a slight wound which bled a little. He was crouching by my side when they were bursting and I noticed that he was breathing very quickly and put it down to fright. I was surprised later to find that he was wounded. He went back to his company and got it dressed. Had a smoky fire in an old dug out which made us feel a little sick. Wrapped a couple of sand bags around my boots which kept my feet fairly warm during the night. One lad on sentry amused me, he was evidently very sleepy and when on patrol would ask him if all was well. He would twist around and say "all correct" and I believe he would be asleep again before we were 50 yards away.

Monday 5 February 1917

Went back to the supports where we had breakfast and made ready for a bit of rest in the dug outs. Pasfield brought his rugs in with mine and I had a bit of a rest before dinner. At dinner time I had to help up with the dinner for the front line. On my return had dinner and was then put **on fatigue repairing a trench**. We had just got our picks from the dump and was back on the job for a few minutes when a shell fell fairly on the trench in which we had passed a few minutes before. Set to work on the side of the trench with the picks. The sides were as hard as rocks and slow headway was made. The frozen ground jarred the hands very severely. At tea time helped to carry up the tea to the line and then had my own and retired to bed. During the afternoon hear rumours of **Germans “declaring war on neutral vessels”** and that America will in all probability join with the Allies. At 3 in the morning had to go on sentry for 2 hours in one of the bays. It was extremely cold and seemed to go through clothes like a knife. Had a pair of big trench socks on so my feet were not too bad.

Tuesday 6 February 1917

Stayed in bed at stand to on account of just having come off guard. Packed up rugs and chattels and came back to the subsidiary line where we had breakfast. **Put on gas guard** and took the 2nd shift from 2 till 6. Had a wash in the meantime and dinner of shadows **stew made principally of bully beef**. The sun came out fairly warm during the afternoon but did not manage to thaw any ice. While on gas alarm sentry I go in by the scouts kitchen fire and kept myself warm. While there a **Russian who is in the scouts** and has joined the 23rd while in Australia came in. Someone asked him how many languages he knew. He said he **could speak 6 languages** – Russian, English, French, Japanese, Chinese and Spanish. He evidently had a gift for languages. He is only 30 and is not at all bad looking. He wrote his name and address of Battalion in the back of this book in Japanese. He also wrote it in Russian and the Russian National Anthem. Last night **one of the scouts got hit by a machine gun** whilst out in no mans land, in the hip, fortunately no bones were hit.

Wednesday 7 February 1917

Went on the gas alarm at 2.00 in the morning after a refreshing sleep in a dug out. I lit the snipers cooks fire and then called him from his dug out to make the breakfast for the snipers. On getting to work he made me a cup of tea and found some bacon for me. Called several corporals for one of the sergeants and after calling Carlson who was next on guard, I **returned again to the bunk** where I stayed until late in the morning. After dinner, had a shave and wash, and then in the evening helped up with the rations to the supports. There was a bit of an artillery duel on when we arrived. A sergeant in one of the dug outs had **a fire in a brazier**. A curtain made of sand bags got too near the fire and it was soon in flames. Henry Letter happened to be near and hopped out yelling “fire”. I hopped into the trench and pulled down the bags and smothered the fire with some other bags. The Germans evidently saw the blaze and **sent some whizzbangs unpleasantly close**. I wasn't long making a bee line for the communication trench and got for dear life down it for the subsidiary lines. Went to sleep in the little dug out and rose at about ½ past 6.

Thursday 8 February 1917

We were **taken up to the front line** and I was put in the right bay under Corporal Gardener. Did some observing with the periscope but all was quiet on Fritz front. Put a couple of sand bags around my boots which kept them fairly warm. After observing for some time, I was taken away and **put on a bit of pick and shovel work repairing** a by. After dinner was put on a bit of carpentering further along our front. While on the job some of the B Company sent Fritz some rifle grenades. They sound like a mopouk? going

through the air. **Fritz replied with some pineapples.** I could hear the pop of his gun which fires them and dodged in the bay. One went off very close to the place where I had been working. I heard a couple more pops and looking up could see them coming apparently straight for me. I hopped around the corner and got down in such a hurry that I hurt one of the knees on the duck boards. **None of the fragments hit me but the explosion just about deafened me.** I was not long in getting away from that part of the trench. In evening our trench mortars commenced to throw over some shells. They threw over about 200 in a few minutes If you look closely in the air they can be observed turning over and over like an iron bolt. They have a very powerful explosion. They are exploded by means of a timed fuse. Fritz was very quiet and did not reply. In **evening was put on observation and sentry** with Clarkin. The night was not so very cold and managed to get near a fire when off duty for a few minutes.

Friday 9 February 1917

We **went to our respective billets** again. Of course we all felt knocked out and wanted to have a rest. There was to be **a concert in the evening** and we were addressed by Major Butler who was a corporal in the Boer War. He has taken over command since the departure of Colonel Gordon who has gone back to Australia to go on the staff. Felt too tired to go to the concert but some of the lads went and said it was good and that the Major gave a good address. He gave some personal **remembrances for the Boer War.** He said on one occasion he saw a figure advancing and gave the command to halt. No notice was taken and still the figure advanced. He challenged again as no notice was taken so he fired and killed one of their mules.

Saturday 10 February 1917

Awoke feeling better after our sleep physical exercises and football in the evening, wrote some letters.

Sunday 11 February 1917

Went **on sick parade** for a cold and chafing. The doctor gave me some cough mixture and a No.9 (*WW1 medical dictionary – a No.9 is a pill supposedly a panacea for a soldiers ills, but primarily a laxative*). After dinner we were told that there was to be voluntary church parade which we attended in one of the companies billets. The chaplain was the minister who spoke to us often at Lark Hill and in the little church in Amesbury. In the evening went to a **sing song in the Y.M.C.A.** where we were addressed by Chaplain Captain Dane who spoke very well.

Monday 12 February 1917

Put in our respective parties **and I was put in as a bomber** attached to the **Lewis Gunners.** At dinner time, I went around and **had my photo taken** by a youthful photographer with steel helmet on, expect photos on Thursday. Charge ½ dozen 3 ½ francs, pay in advance.

Tuesday 13 February 1917

12 months today since I enlisted as a soldier of the King. Hope it will be all over before another 12 months has elapsed. In the morning had some **revolver practice.** Got 3 hits out of 4 shots. Football which is part of our training was also on the programme. In the afternoon went out on the parade ground and went through our stunt. The ice is beginning to thaw a little and the air is very keen. In the evening wrote a letter to father.

Wednesday 14 February 1917

In morning was **left to clean up the premises** a little while the remainder went on to parade ground. On completing the job I went on down to the Divisional. Baths and got in

and **had a bath** before the arrival of the rest of the school. On my arrival I found that no more parties would be able to get a bath on account of a shortage of coal. Managed to get in and had a bath and change of underclothes which I wanted. Was the only one of the school who managed to get a bath. After dinner we went through the stunt again. The Company are going into the trenches again in the morning.

Thursday 15 February 1917

Went on parade with the lads who were ordered to take towels to get a bath. On arrival at baths we found that we could not get one so had to return. In afternoon went through the stunt again in practice. Had a bit more football and in the evening had tea and went around to the brigade canteen. Got my photos from the youthful photographers. Wrote a few letters in the evening and helped unload some wood for the man at canteen.

Friday 16 February 1917

In the morning we had some more practice of stunt and football, in the afternoon we went through it again and were watched by the heads of the artillery so as to give them a good idea of how the stunt was to be worked. Sent one of my photos home. In evening went to see the **cinema and Pierrots** (see google "Cinema Pierrot"). Secured a photo of the Pierrots. One of the lads is in our company. He is called Jones and has a silvery tenor voice. The lad who takes the part of a girl was there and was very good.

Saturday 17 February 1917

In the morning had drill as usual and some more football. Corporal Paris has promised to send money and diary home in case I get knocked.

Sunday 18 February 1917

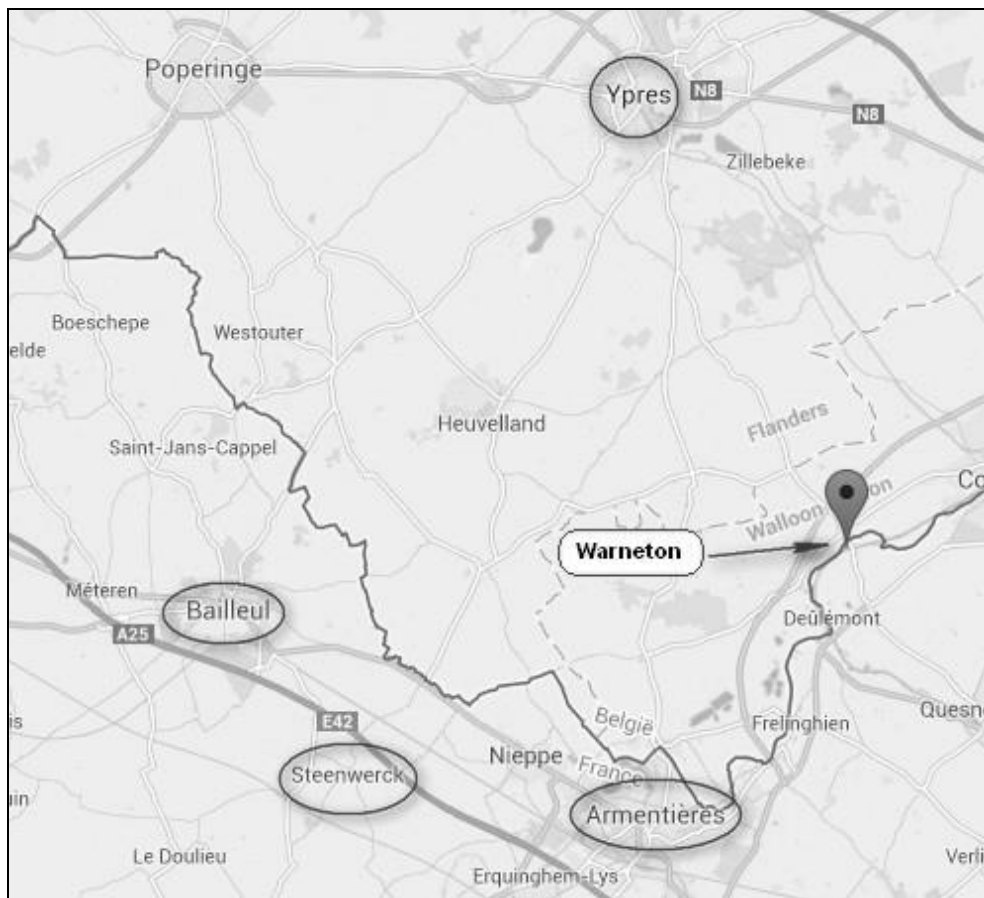
No porridge for breakfast but a fair amount of bacon. After breakfast we went down to our parade ground and practice our stunt. We went through the performance in the dark last night and it was very foggy, quite suitable for a raid. In afternoon we were taken out to do some **bomb throwing** and had some more football which is part of our training and keeps us fit. In evening I went up to the trenches to see if there were any letters. Got a number for several of the lads but had no luck myself. Had a cup of tea at the Y.M.C.A. on my way back and arrived at the Brigade Canteen in time for a service in one of the rooms. I was told by a man who was in the know that our raid was to be tonight. He did not know that I was one of the raiders and that I would know if there was to be **a raid tonight.**

Chapter 15 Raiding party 19th February 1917

Monday 19 February 1917

Had a lecture by the C.C. of the raiding party and everything appears to be well understood by the men. We are all **anxious for it to be a success and that we will secure a few prisoners** as it will be the first success for the Brigade if it comes off alright. In case we get caught by the Germans they will have no means of identifying us as we will not wear our discs or anything to indicate what we are. **Monday Night** - We have had our great even for which we have been training so long and strenuously. It was a very lively affair right through. We raided his trenches. **I was in the covering party and had the position of bomber attached to the Lewis gunners** The whole of the party got right over to where Fritz were, without being observed. The mud was two inches deep on the no mans land but underneath it was hard as iron being still frozen below. We **had to find a shell hole to get in out of the way of machine gunfire.** Had to cross a creek and there was some ice still on it. The **Lewis gunners got over alright and I did also.** The other bomber got a bit off the track and got in the creek up to his waist. I had to drag him

out and then went to look out for a shell hole to stop in, on then look out for any Fritz who might try to get around him and hem us in. I found a shell hole about 2 feet deep full of water which I thought might serve the purpose.



The other lad had one also. I had just got near my shell hole **when our barrage opened**. Talk of an inferno. It sounded like the crack of doom. I was near the edge and fell in with the shock of the sound. It went on without intermission for four minutes. Then the barrage lifted off the front line and I knew **the lads were charging in to Fritz trenches**, We lay there while the guns still played on the trenches on either side of where the lads enter and on his supports. **Our machine guns** were cracking away like a thousand motor cycles playing on Fritz positions of machine guns. **Our heavy howitzers** were smashing into his gun positions and the lads some going on with the job and others **helping back the wounded seemed quite unconcerned by the pandemonium**. The leading party got into the trench and found them a succession of shell holes. No sign of duck boards could be seen . Just as the demolition party were clambering through the borow? ditch which is in front of the trench, **a shell exploded right in front of them blowing one of the party's head off knocking ½ dozen of the others down by the concussion**. The leading party which consisted of bayonet men, bombers etc came to a **Fritz dug out** which was intact having escaped the direct hit of a shell. **Several rifles were about including German steel helmets** which were taken charge of by some of the party. The lads waiting in anticipation of the demolition party coming along with **the gun cotton to blow in the steel door of the dug out**. When the time arrived to leave the trenches they reluctantly left the dug out without doing any injury to it. Not even a hole big enough to put a Mills Hand grenade in could be found.

The party on the other side found a dug out which had been blown right in by one of our shells, no **doubt burying a number of Huns** at the same time. They **bayoneted one**

German in the trench who tried to halt them. **One lad was killed in the trenches and a few received wounds** from shrapnel. During this period I and the 3 others of the party of Lewis gunners were lying on our stomachs, keeping a wary eye on our right flank to ward any counter attack from Fritz. We could see quite clearly the lads as they started to move back from Fritz trench and had we been Germans instead we could have picked off every man. **We were as cold as ice and wet through** but we dare not move from our posy as we might have been detected and blown up by Fritz who might the surround the party. Although we **lay there for 2 ½ hours with bullets and shrapnel flying** all around **not one of us got a scratch**. We waited until we saw that all the party were on the way back and joined in with the party. The machine gun corporal went to the assistance of helping a wounded stretcher bearer and turning round said to me “here take this gun”. I thought it was the wounded man’s rifle and was surprised to find that it was the Lewis gun. Consequently it slipped through my hands in the slimy mud. I slung it on my shoulder and carried it along with me. It proved very hard going **through the mud which gripped the rubber boots by suction** and my feet would partly come out and I would have stop and get my foot back again. At our parapet I caught up to the lads who were **carrying in the body of one of the poor lads who had been killed**. I scrambled up the parapet and slid down the other side in double quick time exciting **for the greatest danger from enemies machine gun bullets is always at our parapet**.

I never felt any ill effects from the experiences through which I had passed and in company with several more of the lads went on down the communication trench first handing in my **identification card which was the “ace of hearts”**. The unwounded were all loud in their praise of the fortitude and thoughtfulness of the wounded. One lad with a compound fractured arm was asked if he wanted any assistance from the stretcher bearers. He said **“Oh no, I’ll get along back, you cant do anything for that bone is sticking out”** in a quite unconcerned way. Some who had a bad wound in the leg would help by pushing with their good one and not one offered a complaint. No pains were spared to get the lads to the dressing station in as quick time as possible. **I carried the Lewis gun about a mile and then handed it over to the Corporal** while I went around to the subsidiary lines and acquainted my mates with the fact that I had got through alright. There was a wiring party just going out when I got there. On arrival at the spot where we were to have a **drink of cocoa and some curry** I found the Lieutenant looking for me to report back. **I took off the rubber boots and my socks and put on my leather boots again**. And went down to where the lads were put by a fire, who were wounded to wait for a motor transport to take them to the hospital. There was one there who had been shot through the arm and his feet were sopping wet and cold. I removed his boots and socks and dried his feet with a towel. The R.S.M. gave me a pair of dry socks which I put on him and covered him up with a blanket and he was nearly asleep when I left to get to my billets. **I walked down the communication trench, fortunately I had an electric torch** or I would have had some nasty spills off the duck boards. I walked right through the streets without seeing a person and it causes one to get a bit nervy as one when a bullet might come from any building which tower two and 3 storey on either side. On arriving at billets found the lads still awake. They looked a small number after the crowd that had been there before. **Out of 66 who were in the party 37 had been wounded**. One couldn’t help thinking how fortunate to get back without a scratch. The lads told me of an amusing incident that happened while on the stunt. One of our sergeants who was a little chap got hit in the leg by a bit of shrapnel and for the moment thought it was serious. He called out “stretcher bearers I am hit in the leg, I believe it is pretty serious”. He soon recovered and hopped into the trench yelling out for his demolition party. Our C.C. told us we could have the breakfast ration we felt included in the morning. At about 10 o’clock someone a little more energetic than the rest **brought the bacon along from the cook house and we had breakfast**.



Trench Warfare in France, Photos from Google Images

Tuesday 20 February 1917

After breakfast we had some more sleep and then got up and helped Mr Price's batman to carry his stuff around to the hospital. After dinner I went around to Brigade Canteen and saw Corporal Paris who was pleased to see me well and whole. I went on up the trenches and picked up some of my property also some stuff belonging to Lieutenant Gunter who in company with Mr Price had gone over with us. On my return I handed Mr Gunter his property. He was still in bed and thanked me for my trouble. Went to bed fairly early.

Wednesday 21 February 1917

Early in the morning we were spoken to by the C.C. of the raid and he gave us **great praise for the work we had accomplished and said how proud he felt to have been in command of such a brave lot of lads**. He assured us that he did not believe in flattery but felt every word he spoke. He said he could not find words to express his appreciation of our accomplishment. He said that he felt he would have to mention one man who did especial work on the memorable night and that was Arn **Ealey the scout** who has been over with every party that went over before the night of the raid to show them over the ground and to keep Fritz barbed wire under observation as he might repair it at any night. Without doubt he **was the leading light of the raid**. He was everywhere leading, directing and encouraging, He stood on the parapet and said "**There's the trenches boys, hop in and get your cut**". He was not allowed to go in or he would have been well in himself. He has been recommended for a medal I believe and we all hope he will get it. Mr Cope expressed sorrow that so many of the lads had been wounded and that 2 of his lads had fallen to rise no more. He said how surprised and pleased he was to find that **the Lewis gunners had escaped without a scratch**. He described the cheerfulness of all who were in any way injured from the enemies fire. He told us that Major Butler who at present is in full command of the Battalion was going to address us in the afternoon. We were dismissed and told to **pack up everything in readiness to move back** to our respective companies. All the property of the lads who were wounded also had to be packed up in readiness to go to the Quarter Masters Store or follow them to the hospital. After packing up the **lads were skylarking** about and 2 tried to get me off my feet, I gave one the hip throw and twisted the other who fell on my right foot. I twisted round to hold him **when my ankle went crack**. It was agony for some time but I did not let the Lieutenant know that I was hurt or there might have been a noise. In the afternoon the Major visited the lads who were wounded at the hospital at Bailleul, several miles away to thank them for their work done. I hobbled around to the Brigade Canteen and wrote some letters after dinner while waiting for Major Butler to come and address us. He arrived while we were having tea and he spoke to us in much the same vein as the C.C. He said "**Few could have equalled what you did and none could have excelled**". He also conveyed the thanks and appreciation of the General for our splendid performance. We all felt a bit proud about it and I suppose we were to be excused for that. The Company had returned from the lines in the morning so we went up to see some of them. Was greeted with "Hello here's another of our raiders". Only one of my platoon had any injury in the raids.

Thursday 22 February 1917

Took rifle and some of kit around to billet immediately after breakfast and reported on **sick parade for my ankle**. The doctor said it was a very bad sprain and asked me if I would like to go to the **hospital for a few days rest**. I was not too anxious for I thought there might be an enquiry of how it was done and I did not want to get my mates into trouble. He said I was to go so with the assistance of Kelly who has relations at Iron Mine and has lived around Clare most of his life. I took my stuff around to the hospital which is about 20 minutes walk from the doctor's consulting rooms. On arrival I said goodbye to

Kelly and thanked him for the trouble he had gone to help me and was examined by the **doctor who put a plaster on my foot** to press the joints together and got me onto the stretchers which are placed on stands to help from the ground. It is a kind of clearing hospital. No-one staying over a day if they are to be sent on to a rest hospital, or to Blighty (*England*). Wrote a few letters and had a yarn with some of the lads who had plenty of questions to ask about the raid. **I wouldn't have missed being in it now that I have got through**, alright for a little white pig.

Friday 23 February 1917

Very foggy in the morning. Woke for **breakfast which was bacon and cocoa** which I had in bed. Bit of luxury having breakfast in bed. Fifteen of the 39th were brought in who had received injuries from a strafe last night. Fritz raided in a different part and lost several men. **Two Germans were brought in to be treated for wounds received**. They never had a button left. It is a trick of the lads to take off their buttons so that the Germans will have to **keep their hands in their trouser pockets** to keep them up. Owing to the number of stretcher cases today, I will not be moved until tomorrow.

Saturday 24 February 1917

Fine morning. Breakfast in bed. Foot inspected by doctor, says still swollen and will have go to D.R.S. **Divisional Rest station**. Few more cases coming in every little while. In a big front there is always someone who gets ill or has an accident or gets a bit of shrapnel etc. Wrote two or three letters in the morning and after dinner had a shave and wash. Saw one of my mates who came round on dental parade who offered to come around with any letters or parcels if there were any for me. There had apparently been no letters or parcels as my friend has not appeared. Several more wounded have come in and one gets quite accustomed to seeing the poor lads who make no murmur although some are in great pain. It seems to be the same in most cases that a bullet wound hurts more about a day after than at the time. One scout was brought in with a **bullet wound right through the palm of his hand**. He said **it felt like a red hot iron** being suddenly being thrust through when it happened. Too many urgent cases to take us away today so have to remain until tomorrow.

Sunday 25 February 1917

Very good morning and plenty of reading matter. Some more wounded brought in. One man must have had a wound in his lungs as he was spitting blood. War truly is cruel and merciless and if the men who say that the war must go on until Germany is punished only realised that our own were getting as equally hurt, they might try to have peace. It is to be **hoped that there will be no more wars after this one has finished**. When one looks back over the time that has elapsed since the world was first startled by Germany's rush on Belgium, it seems a very long time ago and we who heard of it in Australia never realised that it was going to assume the serious aspect which it has. Many in the early stages thought it was a flash in the pan but it will be soon 3 years now from the commencement and no sign yet of peace. **It is interesting to get into conversation with the lads who have come from the different states of Australia, get a little insight into the type of country to be found in Australia**. In a bunk by my bed is a lad who lives 25 miles from Brisbane and his father owns a banana plantation. He lives near the Rockies and tells tales of kangaroo hunts and attacks on the flying fox which has been very destructive to the fruit. There are lads over here who have come from all over the Commonwealth and one gains a lot of information by a talk to them about their native place. No sign of a vehicle to take us to the D.R.S. as yet.. In the evening a vehicle came to light which took us to the **D.R.S.** On arrival was taken around to a ward which of course is not quite as substantial as the Adelaide hospital. Is it made of **wood and tar-felting**

and effectively keeps out the cold. We were given some cocoa and were soon in dreamland.

Monday 26 February 1917

We were visited by the doctor who said I was to go to bed. I soon hopped in and got to work and wrote a number of letters to friends. The censor will be wishing I wasn't in the hospital. The rest is acceptable after the busy time I have been having. Had a talk with an acquaintance who was **buried by a "Minenwerfer" and excavated without being harmed** except for a strain in the back. He is going back to work again in a few days. These **Minenwerfers** are about 3 feet long and are fired from somewhere in their support trenches. They can be seen coming through the air. They are fired into the air at an angle and fall just about straight down. They bury themselves about 3 feet or more in the ground and after about a second burst making a hole in which one can stand comfortably and look over the edge, a huge amount of stuff is thrown up from the force of the explosion. Have very fair meals so we are all happy. Rumours of a big raid tonight by more than one party. This idea was strengthened by the fact that a number of the A.M.C. lads had to go up to the line tonight. In evening **hear guns roaring and so know the raid is on.**

Tuesday 27 February 1917

The A.M.C. lads return from the nights work of fixing up the wounded. They say they wouldn't like to take raiding as an occupation. They said that the boys were very plucky who received wounds and did not make any complaints. Wrote a few more letters. The doctor said a **new plaster had to be put on my foot** to draw it together.

Wednesday 28 February 1917

One of the lads offered to bet that the war would be over before the 29th February. We all hoped it would be as it will be 3 years before it comes. Comes up a bit misty in the morning. After the doctor saw me I got up and **walked into Steenwerck which is about a mile** distant. Looked up the place at which we were billeted when on the bricklayers in the horse shed. The Madame recognised me at once and was pleased to see me. I saw the shed on which I had been working and it has been improved upon since I was there. Went around and saw the family who had been so sociable to me when in Steenwerck. Had to have some café before I left. On my return to the D.R.S. I had some bread and jam and got to by by.

Thursday 1 March 1917

Got up in the morning and had breakfast, in the marquee tent, on **bacon and bread and jam** and I then returned to the bunk ready for the doctor to inspect my foot. Did a bit of mending and sewed on a few buttons. After dinner went to Steenwerck. While there I **saw a number of German airships** floating around. One got over our captain's balloon and fired at the observers with a machine gun. The **observers got out in their parachutes.** The Germans continued to fire on the descending parachutes but I don't think they were hit. I was talking to a New Zealand officer's batman at the time and he pointed out an officer in a Belgium uniform and informed me that he was the cousin of the King of the Belgians. In **evening went to a cinema.** A fair number of civilians were there. There were 11 in one batch. "How many tickets do you want" said official. "Onze" said the girl. "How many is that" asked the official. I informed that it was eleven and all was well. On my **return to the hospital I had a slice of bread and jam and retired.**

Friday 2 March 1917

Stayed in bed after breakfast and then wended my way to Steenwerck with some other patients. Strolled around several of the places at which I had made acquaintances. But the afternoon in very well plenty of coffee for nix and got back to hospital for the night.

Saturday 3 March 1917

Mail closes for Australia today. **Have written more letters for this mail than ever before.** I guess the censors will wish I was back in the lines. Walked into Steenwerck and had photo taken by a girl. 8 francs per dozen. Bought a few brooches also for home. One is a very fair imitation of a spider made of glass and wire. In evening returned to hospital and had some supper.

Sunday 4 March 1917

After inspection by doctor walked into Armenteries in the hope of getting some letters from home. It is about a 5 mile walk and had a lift for about a mile. I went around to different Battalion Quarter Masters and got a letter for one of the boys in the hospital. My letters had not been sorted so had to return disappointed. In evening had a feed of **eggs and chips.**

Monday 5 March 1917

Snowed during the night and it was very cold in the morning. Had been cold in the trenches I guess. After doctor's inspection toddled down to Steenwerck and wrote a letter home. Brought back some French bread and the lads had supper of **bread, jam and butter.**

Tuesday 6 March 1917

Doctors did not arrive until nearly dinner time. He thinks my ankle is progressing very well. Will soon be out now. In afternoon went to Steenwerck and got some papers for the boys to read. Went to **cinema** in the evening and had a good time

Wednesday 7 March 1917

Went to Armenteries to get any letters from home. The weather was very rough and windy. Had to walk nearly all the way down. My Battalion were out but got no letters as they had been sent on to the Base. Asked Pasfield to write for them to be readdressed to Battalion. They told me that **some of my mates had been hit.** One was **killed by a pineapple** which landing at his feet blowing off one leg. He died about 12 hours later. Ben Thick got wounded in two or three places by machine gun bullets. Saw Corporal Paris and got my money which he was looking after for me and then came back to D.R.S. part way by motor transport.

Thursday 8 March 1917

After inspection by doctor, went to Steenwerck and in the evening went to pictures. Programme was very good. Charlie was there in his usual fun. Hear rumours of my Battalion moving.

Friday 9 March 1917

In afternoon **got my photos** from the little girl photographer and returned to the bunk. Saw a few more of my Battalion who are in a different ward with various illnesses.

Saturday 10 March 1917

A Major had a look at us and we were visited by some heads. One was a civilian by his clothes. There was a Brigadier General and he asked me what was the trouble. I told him it was a twisted ankle.

Sunday 11 March 1917

After dinner was going for a walk when I heard the anti-aircraft guns pounding away at some **German Taube Planes** (*1st german plane to be mass-produced, Taube is german for "dove"*) It was an interesting sight. The **Taubes attacked our observation balloon** and the **observers jumped out in their parachutes**. The **German machine gunner fired at them** as they descended and as I heard later wounded one in the leg. He then turned attention to the balloon and fired some **incendiary bullets into it**. They succeeded in catching it alight and it **descended in a mass of flames**, while the black smoke curled upward and was blown away in the breeze. A number of our battle planes appeared and chased the plane but did not succeed in overtaking it. Later we noticed smoke over the German lines and concluded that we had reciprocated. In the afternoon wended my way to **the Y.M.C.A.** and I was asked to stay for tea which the Y.M. provided every Sunday afternoon to the first 80 men to put their names on a paper. **I helped to prepare the room for the spread and had tea** with two or three others who were giving their help. Grace was sung and then tea was partaken. There was a big draw on the cocoa The tea was laid on very nice table cloths, white as snow and the cups were light and delicate. **I played the piano for a hymn** when the meal was over. In the evening we had service which I enjoyed immensely. The men picked their own hymns and they scarcely gave one hymn time to be finished before they sang out another. The Y.M. official gave me some food to take home for the lads at the D.R.S.

Monday 12 March 1917

Rained very much during the night but cleared away a bit in the morning. Packed up a few things to send home in a tobacco tin. **There is another balloon up in the same place as where the other was brought down**. Have secured a piece of the basket of the balloon as a souvenir.

Tuesday 13 March 1917

It is **12 months ago today** since I went into camp at **the Exhibition building** in Adelaide and when I look back over the past year I cannot but see that in it has been **compressed more experience** than I have had in the same time in my life before. I have had a soldiers experience in camp holiday and in action in those 12 months. I cannot say that it has been a disagreeable life and I feel sure that **it has broadened my mind** and given me an opportunity of **studying human nature** as I never had before. I have been brought into contact with **English Tommies, Scots, Irish, French, Canadians** and I find that they are different from each other in many ways. The **French of the class which I have seen are rather inclined to be rather low so far as our standard of propriety and decency goes**. To my mind they have through centuries come to this stage. Every Frenchman seems to be a Roman Catholic and duly goes to mass. Some are very dirty about their houses. There is **little disguise to their public urinals** which are placed in very conspicuous places in the streets. The **peasant appears to be hard working** sort of a man. This experience has to a large extent **satisfied my longing for travel** which is in almost every youth who feels a longing for the far country. After all a place is what one makes it and once can be happy anywhere if it is home. I look back over the past and I feel that I have not done all that I should have done to help others and pray for strength to help any whom I can. **This life is full of temptations and it is one which makes you think seriously, apart from the fact that one is in daily contact with death** when in the trenches. It is true that familiarity breeds contempt. I recollect when at Lark Hill doing my bomb throwing how it gave one a kind of creepy feeling to hold the little engine of death which by the releasing for a lever caused the bomb to explode. Now we go to trenches and almost forget that we are every moment in danger of death or wounding. I remember being disappointed at being transferred from the 50th to the 43rd but I feel that somehow it might be for the best. I have had lads wounded right by my side , but so far I

have not had a scratch. I went to **Steenwerck in the evening and attended the cinema** which was very fair. On my return the report came through of the fall of Baghdad. It was captured by General Maude and his troops. Everyone is feeling elated and are anxious to see the papers for authentication.

Wednesday 14 March 1917

Baghdad has fallen but not much details have got in to the papers yet. Seems to be a great **shortage of potatoes** in England but it has not affected the military yet as we are getting plenty. There was a raid by our boys last night, but they found that the Germans had flooded their front trench. In evening, after putting in some overtime making a chart of French coins to send home and to friends. I went to Steenwerck and attended the Y.M.C.A. where there was a bible class or part of **debating society** to talk over its social problem etc. A New Zealander opened the meeting and he spoke very well indeed and there was some very sensible things spoken. The question discussed was "On what thing should the church place emphasis to gain converts". That it had failed to a large extent is all too apparent and we are faced with the problem of discovering what emphasis should be placed upon. He outlined several things of course to open a discussion. One being "The reward of labour done in the hereafter." One lad said that it was his opinion that the love of Jesus Christ was sufficient and no other would do to make Christians. I coincided with him there and several other questions and suggestions were made on the same subject.

Thursday 15 March 1917

When the doctor came around I told him that I guessed I would be well enough to get out to the Battalion again. I was put down for a bath. After breakfast while strolling around the year, I picked up a shell nose cap which had been on one of our anti-aircraft shells. They are shrapnel shells. **Had a bath and a change of underclothes. Marched back to hospital and then returned to Y.M.** where a band concert is to be held. Last night **two of the men in our ward went to an estaminet and got a wee bit merry.** One had slippers on and the other attempted to carry him through some mud by the gate. He got off the track and they both fell in the ditch which is a particularly offensive mixture. They presented a sorry spectacle as they came in wet to the skin. It sobered them though. It is my intention to give this book to the Y.M. official to send home *aprae la gare? (après la guerre – after the war)*

Clarence's Diary Book 6 June to 4 August 1917 (March to June missing!)

Wednesday 6 June 1917

Had a swim in canal and some of the civilians are packing up **as Fritz has been bombarding the town** doing some damage during the night. Bought a few postcards and silk handkerchiefs which I am leaving to a Tommy to send to Australia for me. **Issued with a number of necessary articles to take to the trenches tonight.** Left after dark and made our way along the **trenches where we slept** for the night.

Thursday 7 June 1917

see (<http://www.greatwar.co.uk/ypres-salient/battles-ypres-salient.htm>)

Had a couple of hours sleep and then had to get up and get our **shovels and put in a bit of overtime after a 4 mile walk.** On returning had breakfast which was much appreciated. We then put our ground sheets down. The enemy shelled a farm a good way from us each shell sending up a cloud of dust. Witnessed an **aeroplane duel** in the afternoon. One machine brought down by our planes. In evening moved up further. **Fritz sent over some gas** shells making it necessary to put our gas helmets on. We were in

reserve and had to stand to as the remainder were going over. At about 1 o'clock a terrible explosion occurred. The **ground shook and trembled** worse than any earth quake that I have experienced. It was **our mines going up near Messines**. Three went up altogether each one shaking the ground bringing down pieces of dirt down from either side of the trenches. Then with the suddenness of a bolt from the blue our guns opened out on Fritz trenches, batteries etc. Such a pandemonium seldom heard. The guns opened out all along the line for about a 11 mile frontage. **It would make any man quail to be under such terrible barrage**. One could not hear himself speak at times so loud was the roar. For a few moments there would be a little lull and then would break out with renewed energy. I heard later that the lads who were hopping over the front line did not know of the mines going up and they, as we thought that it was a mine being exploded by Fritz under us. The whole earth seemed to shake and tremble as from a violent earthquake and then all the fiends seemed to be set loose, such a clamour and roared opened up immediately. We were in where we were secure from shrapnel. **His guns soon opened out on us searching for our batteries**. He knew that the remainder of the Brigade were ready to hop over to take Fritz first line of trenches. **The barrage continued all night without intermission** while we waited in expectation to be called to give any assistance to any Battalion which might require it. We were not required and at dawn we were still waiting to be called.

Friday 8 June 1917

The **barrage still continued and early in the morning** some walking cases of wounded commence to dribble through. A small party of **wounded Germans appeared looking well pleased at being captured**. One was smiling and nodding to every one he passed on the way down and I heard of a party who gave a whoop of delight and threw his caps in the air when they got to the "birds cage". The boys are all happy and speak in **praise of the splendid artillery which is backing us up**. They all consider it is perfect and said that a mosquito couldn't get away from the barrage. A lot of **flying pigs were also sent over** making a hole in which a fair sized house could be placed. By midday the barrage had eased off a lot while **planes with ever watchful pilots flew back and forward from the enemies line** directing and calling up for artillery etc. I believe that **over 6,000,000 shells had been fired** over to Fritz and it is quite conceivable. Later in the day a further advance of 800 yards was made and still we were not called on. During early part of previous night I had been "running" and fairly lively work it proved to be. It was a grand sight to watch our planes as they flew in scores across **Fritz trenches being shelled all the time**. It is astonishing the amount of stuff that a plane gets thrown at it without doing it any injury. **One of the Fritz balloons was released from its moorings** either by one of our shells or by Fritz who was not anxious to let it fall into our hands. We were all excited to know that the opportunity afforded us of making a push was meeting with such success.

Saturday 9 June 1917

The **enemy were busy during the night sending over gas shells** making it necessary to keep our box respirators on. Without doubt they are all are admirable for keeping the gas out. With a little practice one can sleep with them on. **Had to snatch some rest on the duckboards**. They were not the most comfortable place that I have slept on but the sun was very warm in the day so it was not too bad. During the day **Fritz was massing for a counter attack**. Our watchful planes sighted them and called our artillery which dispersed them. They were unable to counter attack so intense was our barrage. **A lot of material had already fallen into our hands** "whiz bang" guns which are a 13 pounder. In afternoon we were detailed to carry some material to our new dump. Before reaching our old front line Fritz opened up a bombardment. Plenty of stuff was flying everywhere. A lot of heavy of heavy stuff was being sent over. 6 inch shells which threw up a cloud of

dust and black smoke on exploding. **One gets quite expert at judging where a shell will land.** When a shell is going to land close, it will sound very vicious. It whines when going overhead at a high altitude and sounds very lazy. The sound of the gun firing a shell from a great distance overtakes the shell before reaching one. At night the flash of the gun can be seen for a great distance and the **length of time between the flash and the report will tell the artillery men how far the gun is away** as sound travels a certain distance per second.

Sunday 10 June 1917

In morning in company with my Lieutenant went to the scene of operations. While on the **way Fritz sent over some gas shells** making it necessary to don our helmets. Saw another Colonel who had been over the top having his 2 hours in a shell hole. He was much different in appearance to the parade Colonel. He was dusty and unshaven. Got necessary direction from him and went to our old front line. Saw a **Fritz dead there who probably proved fractious when bringing him over and had to be bayoneted.** Messines was nothing but a heap of broken bricks and debris. There were very few of our lads killed in the space of ground which was "no mans land" between the enemies and our front line. Had to accompany our officer round for some time and then we went back to our original supports leaving two runners behind. One of them being the Lieutenant's batman. Returned subsequently and brought them back to the Lieutenant. While there we had breakfast. **One of Fritz planes flew over at a low altitude and made ourselves objectionable by emptying our magazines at him.** He flew away apparently uninjured and as some of our lads were working out in the open I came to the conclusion that he would send over a lot a shrapnel. He sent over very little doing no injury. Later in day had to run and tell the party to return. In the evening **Fritz lobbed a shell by our cook house, killing two of our cooks.** In evening we had a little rest.

Monday 11 June 1917

Have been doing a lot of running from Headquarters. Had some open space to run over and once a shell landed very close. I assumed the prone position in very quick time, skinning my hands in the process. Up again and on. During the day one of my friends Bill Carlson who was a Lewis gunner, a splendid fellow, was **killed by a shell which landed behind him while he was carrying my rations.** He was riddled with fragments. A lad just in front of him called Charlie Graves not touched but was killed later in the week. Bill Carlson lived in Kapunda and has a brother in the Battalion. He is missed by all the company. **In evening we moved up to the trenches** across the open ground between our original front line and our new lines. We passed by a wood where we saw a light gun which we have captured from the enemy, shortly after passing a shell landed very close to where we had been. We continued up to our new support trenches and a lot of us were under the impression that we were in our new front line. It was our intention to advance our new front line some 300 yards. **Shortly after getting into the support trench Fritz opened up an intense barrage on us.** A portion of the platoon were sent up the front line unknown to the Lieutenant. Word was left with the batman that the remainder were to go up immediately as there was little time to spare before they would go over. I found the Lieutenant and told him and so he gathered the remainder together and we started for our new position. Being under the impression that we were in our new front line we did not know where to find the remainder of the platoon. **I volunteered to look for the remainder and followed the support trench** around in the way that the others had gone. I came to a stop where it crossed a road and retraced my steps. Came to an old trench leading to the left and in front of our support trenches. I ran along shouting for the platoon. So great was the row that I could scarcely hear my own voice. The **shells were bursting around and machine gun bullets were whistling everywhere.** I expected to find them in a shell hole so kept an eye open for them. After a time I came to a stop and

had a look around to see if I could locate my direction at all. I felt as much at sea as it is possible. I could see no mark to indicate where I was. I thought it best to retrace my steps and dump my equipment as I was just about exhausted. I placed it in an old trench near a dead German so that I could locate it on the morrow if I had the good fortune to get through. I went back once more over the same ground with nothing to guide me. After going a couple of hundred yards I came to a trench running in the same direction as the trench I had been in. There were some footmarks on the ground which showed up in the vary? lights which I thought may have been made by our lads as they were making for Fritz trench. I got in and putting the bullet in the rifle ready for action, I pushed down the trench. There was no-one about so retraced my steps and after going over a length of open ground found myself in another part of our support lines. There were several of our men there. They were of a different Battalion and were crouching in the trenches I put my rifle at the ready and challenged them. They answered and I asked them if they had any idea of where Fritz line was from where we were. They were unable to inform me but told me that their sergeant was a little further to the rear. **The bombardment was continuing without intermission.** They advised me to crawl over them to get along and not to risk getting a bullet out in the open. I did so, bearing my weight on their backs as I crawled over them with my rifle in my hand. On reaching the sergeant he gave me the direction and I was going to endeavour to find it. I went further along and came to a captain who refused to let me go on. I explained to him the urgency of the case that a number of the platoon had already gone on and that they, who were left, make haste to get to the front line. He said that they would not go over while Fritz was shelling us and that a portion were still left. I asked him for his name so that I would know who to say stopped me if it was necessary. After a short time there was a lull and I got round to where the remainder were. **The Lewis gunners turned up and I found a runner who had just come from the front line.** I asked him to show me the way to it. He did so and I went with him. I found that the line was in a position entirely different to that which one would naturally supposed. It was facing almost opposite to the support trenches, so it was no wonder that I was unable to discover it, for I had been going almost in an opposite direction when looking for it. I found that a number of the Battalion we were relieving were still in so there was a good deal of congestion. It was still very dark. Mr McAnna accompanied us and on arrival held a bit of a council with the platoon commanders who were in the front line. **I had to run up and down behind the trench 5 or 6 times carrying information from one Lieutenant to another.** There was a bit of moving around and at last they were in fairly good order. The line had been taken in front when they had intended to do so. They met with very little trouble. Fritz threw a number of bombs and then ducked for his life. They then proceeded to dig in. The platoon commander and company commander came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to have the remainder of the platoon behind in the supports so I went back across no man's land and gave the order. Even the lieutenants were hard at work getting well down under cover. The ground being excellent for digging as no picking was required.

Tuesday 12 June 1917

When daylight appeared we had a good look at our surroundings. All around the ground was ploughed up by huge shells. It is an old saying that 2 shells seldom land in the same place. It was nothing unusual here. Shell holes were linked up until they seemed like a small trench. Looking at the ground from a distance it looked like a fresh ploughed field. In place where there was no positions of importance the ground was left untouched much the same as when a field is cut out for ploughing and a strip has been left. I guide my Captain to the front line later on and had a look at **a big concrete machine gun dug out.** It had been built inside an old farmhouse which had been blown away leaving the base wall of concrete practically intact. It is astonishing how much the concrete dug outs can withstand from shells. **One shell had landed just outside the**

opening at which the machine gunner was operating the gun. Half his head had been blown off and the debris had covered his gun. I got inside being careful to avoid any wires or anything which might conceal explosives for **Fritz is a past master in the art of making traps** to catch the unwary. The interior was divided into 2 rooms with a doorway at the rear which was built in such a way that fragments could not enter. There was also a small iron door which had been covered with wood. The shell must have ignited the place or was set on fire by our lads as the place was all burnt. **Hundreds of rounds of ammunition had been exploded.** There was some loaves of bread and German sausages which was left intact. The bread is almost black and looked extremely tough. There was also **a box of concussion bombs which had escaped the fire.** Took the opportunity of having a look around. Saw some gruesome sights as I passed from our front line to the supports. **Got in one of Fritz trenches which are very wide, not unlike a sunken road.** There was a number of big dug outs. The majority of which bore traces of the recent bombardment. In one case, **a shell landed blowing 4 Germans out,** they were still lying there as death had taken them. Saw one of our Lieutenants who had been caught while advancing. **A stretcher bearer in his errand of mercy lay still and silent** while the war continued with unabated fury. **The ground is sprinkled with dead of either side lying asleep each one his duty done.** Their differences all over, they lie till that great day when all will go to be judged. It was sad to contemplate them as one thought of what each one had fought for. **One fighting for the right and justice** for all that one holds dear in this life. **The other fighting because he had been forced to by that power under which he was yoked.** The misery which would follow when the news eventually reached the mother, father, sisters etc of those who now lay still for ever. **Found a new gas helmet which I took as well as a water bottle as a souvenir.** Our lads were busy digging continuously in a way which brought forth commendation from the heads who saw what we had done. Later in the afternoon a party had to go forward to dig in a different position. Just as we reached our front line **Fritz commenced to shell us again** and I was sent back to tell the C.C. (*Camp Commander?*) **that it was impossible to proceed on account of it.** I got back alright and delivered the message. He told me to remain until the shelling subsided. I did so and several shells landed very close. One landed behind the parapet a little way from **us burying one of the lads up to his neck.** He was quickly extracted from his awkward position. Had to go up and tell the boys to return as it was considered not safe to continue to this job. From there **I went back to the supports and waited to take a party of 4 to the front line.** This order was cancelled subsequently and we made ready to get out of the trenches as were to be relieved. Some of the relieving Battalion had already appeared so we were not long in getting our equipment on. I accompanied Lieutenant McAnna (*Engineer-survived*) and Sergeant Coats back. Had to get through some awkward bits of barbed wire in places. Just before reaching our old front line **Fritz sent over a big shell** which burst with a great noise, sending up plenty of smoke and dust. Another followed it a short while after which made it necessary for us to get down to avoid flying fragments. We hurried until we got into our communication trench where we had a short rest before going back to our place of rest. On arrival had a drink of water and got down on the duck board with our ground sheet over us for a sleep.

Wednesday 13 June 1917

Early in the morning we had reveille in the shape of **a big shell which landed uncomfortably close to us.** It lodged just between two trenches fortunately not hitting any one. We got a bit further away for a while after that. In afternoon we **made our way out of the trenches and stayed at a little village** which had a rough time from shells as have all near the line.

Thursday 14 June 1917

Did not rise until fairly late and then **had a look around the village**. The church had shared the fate which seems to be their lot in these parts, as **Fritz seems to get right on the churches** and knocks them about considerably. Learnt later in the day that the 50th were close at hand so went to see them. Found Horton Jennison (*survived ww1*) who was well, Mr Arthur Riley (*survived*) and Jack Edwards (*survived*) were also there, learnt that several of the 3/50th had been killed in the advance. Stanley Bishop (*from Hanson – survived*) is on leave in England and will be able to look up Hedley who has been wounded and is still there. This is the 2nd time that he has been wounded. Several of the lads have been killed including Bob Summers (*from Peterborough*) and Tom Retalics (*Thomas Rettallack died 10.6.1917*) whom saw when in Merris (*near Bailleul*).

Friday 15 June 1917

Moved to Steenwerck and stayed at a farm house. The peoples were called Costenoble? **and were put in the barn to sleep**. We had breakfast and then had a look around. I had a chat with the old lady and she told me that she had 3 sons go to the war. One was killed by a fragment of a shell and the other two were taken prisoner, while another died of a tumour in the brain. I thought that they had their fair share of troubles. Eggs could be obtained at the cottage and was well patronised every night before going to bed.

Chapter 16 Volunteered for the Band, between serving in the trenches

Saturday 16 June 1917

Receive a number of letters which gives us all a special treat as it is the first mail for about a month. The mail having been delayed. Visited my friends at Steenwerck who were pleased to see me and said they were glad I had not been killed. Wrote several letters home. Next day **our Camp Commander asked for any volunteers for the band**, who had any idea of how to play an instrument. Dick Thiele? and self sloped? arms. Three men also had to go to the mat, as we call going before the C.C., on a **charge of unshaven** and I was one of the escorts. Two were given 2 days C.B. (*Confined to Barracks*) and the other was dissatisfied and his case is going to the Colonel.



Have taken **the Contra Bass which is the biggest instrument** in the band to play. Some difficulty is experienced in getting down the lowest notes. As the instrument is very dirty I put some overtime polishing it.

Sunday 17 June 1917

Had short **service in evening** which I attended. **Leave had been granted** early in the afternoon to lads who wished to go to Bailleul or any close towns. The Chaplain gave a very fine address. He spoke of the bravery displayed by the lads in the trenches. The chivalry and thoughtfulness of self which characterised all their actions. He said that we had made an imperishable name for ourselves when the opportunity was given to us to prove our worth. He was very emotional when he spoke of the bereaved ones who would never see their brave laddies who left them with a smile in that far off loved land, who now lay still in their last resting place. We have been **inspected by the General of the Corps** and he spoke of the good work done by us. The Colonel is getting the D.S.O. because of the good work done by the Battalion. Several have been mentioned in despatches and the General spoke to each one who had been mentioned. One lad was there who was in the 3/50th with me. He had done some good work in looking for lost platoons. It was a very easy matter for one to get lost in the wilderness of shell holes. Several more who had done equally good work came back after it and were congratulated by their mates who perhaps had done greater things but not been seen.

Monday 18 June 1917

Band practice. Had some rain which made it necessary to get under cover. In evening was **practising the big bass in a paddock near billets in which a cow was feeding.** She seemed to think that it was a challenge to fight for she got too close to be comfortable. I thought it wise to get a distance between us, so got on other side of the fence and continued. **The fruit trees are beginning to get little apples, pears etc. While the cherry trees** have a load of cherries which be ripe in about a month. In the morning a number of **Fritz planes came over and dropped bombs on the railway station.** A few civvies were killed and wounded.

Tuesday 19 June 1917

Band practice in morning. No parade in afternoon but had to **get ready for inspection** by the Brigadier at 6 o'clock. We were all ready at the time and he was well pleased at D Company's turn out. He made mention of our boots which were well polished for the occasion.

Wednesday 20 June 1917

Practice again. In afternoon I helped for a while with the **gas helmets which were inspected** by the gas N.C.O. Quite a number of articles get in the bags – pipes, cigarettes, papers, letters, envelopes etc which are confiscated as it is against the rules to carry anything in the bags. In one bag a fork was found which is very bad as it is liable to puncture the rubber and so allow the gas to get in. In afternoon I was given a pass to Steenwerck. While **there Fritz came over in strength and brought down two of our observation balloons** with his plane using incendiary bullets. They fired at the observers as they were falling in their parachutes. In the **evening went to the cinema.**

Thursday 21 June 1917

Up at 2 o'clock and moved off to go back to the lines. Had a drink of tea and after a **5 mile march we stopped and had breakfast.** Stayed in same billets as before. After breakfast made our bunks and got to sleep. Got up for dinner and went to sleep again.

Friday 22 June 1917

Rose at 7 and had breakfast. Has been raining during the night and is still drizzling. Heard that Bob Summers and Tom Retalics (*Retallack*) graves are only a little way from here. **Had to get ready to move up the line** and after putting packs in the store, word came through that **bandsmen other than stretcher bearers were not to go in the line this time.** Had

to report to a sergeant and draw my pack again from the stores. Went up and saw the lads as they went up to the lines. Saw **some Portuguese soldiers** who would talk a little French, they said they were working on the railway.

Saturday 23 June 1917

Rose at 7 and had breakfast and then had a shave. **Fritz sent over some big gas shells during the night** and one explosive shell. In morning aided by clouds **several Fritz planes came over and brought down 3 of our observation balloons**. The observers all got down alright by parachutes. In evening we shifted our quarters and went into a tent which we erected. I was put in charge of about a dozen men and **made some 200 tent pegs**. They were not very artistic as they were made from cases but they served the purpose. After which **we were detailed to go to the front line on fatigue** and were told that we would get back at 3 o'clock in the morning. We started in parties for the trenches and did not take rifle or equipment. When we reached the dump? **Fritz sent over a lot of gas shells** which were mostly tear shell causing the eyes to smart very severely. It **smells like pineapples and makes the eyes water as when peeling onions**. We had a fairly lively time and after a number of delays **we got our duck boards which we were to carry and made a start for the trenches**. We crossed the La Durum? (*Canal de la Deule*) and made our way up past Messines. **Fritz sent over some big shells and fragment of which wounded one of our party**, a bandsman, on the wrist. It bled pretty freely, but he was able to get back on his own alright. The corporal who was in charge of my party got in with some others, so we joined up with some others. We eventually reached our destination and I believe we had gone very little short of 8 miles then. When on our way back several big shells landed close. I dropped down in a ditch and **got stinging nettles in my arms and legs** They burnt all the way home. About a mile from there **Fritz greeted us with gas shells which landed very close**. One landed about 4 yards away and **the black cloud of gas could be seen issuing from the burst shells**. Our sergeant had a bit of worry with his helmet and got a lungful of tear shell gas, fortunately it was not asphyxiating or he would not have lived to get home. We were beginning to feel a bit tired after our fairly heavy tasks and were **glad to have a mug of tea when we arrived at our tents of an absence of 7 hours**.

Sunday 24 June 1917

Stayed in bed until dinner time after the little sleep of a last night. **Fritz plane came over again and brought down another balloon**. It is said that we have accounted for **several of his planes yesterday** so things are balanced. In afternoon we had **a band practice** with another Battalion and after tea I wrote several letters home. **In evening Fritz planes came over and dropped a number of bombs uncomfortably close** to where we were camped. A woman was heard screaming probably from fright and there was a bring rush down the road from the danger zone. **Searchlights were brought to bear and Fritz disappeared**.

Monday 25 June 1917

C.C.'s **parade early morning**. Satisfied with general appearance but promises a more strict parade tomorrow. **Band practice again**. Dinner time **got another instrument from Quartermasters Store**. The B Flat Bass being a bit leaky. **This instrument is an E Flat Bass**. In evening write a few more letters.

Tuesday 26 June 1917

C.O.S. inspection. Considered very good on the average. **Fatigue again in the evening**. This time we had no gas attacks but **plenty of shells which landed unpleasantly close** to wherever we were.

Wednesday 27 June 1917

A bath in morning. Had a **change of underclothes** but would not change our towels as there was a shortage. **Had practice in afternoon.**

Thursday 28 June 1917

Had boots repaired. Some have secured **Aussie military boots which are incomparable.** They have proved to be the best. Hear of our lads being out so received a pass and went to see them. They were all well except Teddy who had hurt his knee. They tell me that a **number of A company were killed while going to the trenches by some of the Fritz ground shrapnel** so called because it bursts on the ground scattering fragments all around in a big radius. **5 were killed and 6 wounded while 2 died subsequently.** Pasfield was well and several asked me to give in some letters for them. I did so. They had come out for a bath and were returning the same night. They were all tired and did not view the return trip with very much joy.

Friday 29 June 1917

Rained heavily during the night. Fatigue cut out on account of it. Went on **sick parade** and was **given a mixture to rub on a bit of eruption by my knee.** Our band conductor has been sent to hospital and so we have to parade with the 4th Battalion band. He gave me some wonderful hints of how to find what key a piece is in by the number of sharps and flats. **I am now practicing on the E Flat Bass** which is easier than the B Flat Bass. In afternoon had **band practice** and in evening we played until sunset. A number **of Fritz planes came over and some shelling was done on our roads.** One, a dud, landed by 3 lorries which would have smashed things up had it exploded. They were not long in getting a move on. Corporal H Corlson wants me to the company quartermaster while were are out and I have agreed to be. Received some letters which were sent to me while **in hospital with a badly twisted ankle.** 5 received, one from Lance Motherall, Mrs Smart, Lloyd A and several others. One referred to **Lieutenant Shannessy. He had been wounded by a sniper** on a very foggy morning while looking over no mans land, when he had **half his cheek blown away by a bullet.**

Saturday 30 June 1917

Rose at about 8 on account of fatigue party which went out last night. **Installed as quartermaster which does not interfere with my practice.** Last night a lad named **Myson got wounded on the fatigue party** which had a lively time. He send word asking me to get some things out of his pack which I will endeavour to do. **After breakfast we had a band practice.** It is raining which will make things very miserable in the trenches. **A large number of Americans have landed in France** to help with the fighting.

Sunday 1 July 1917

Band to go to Artillery lines for a church service. The services of the whole were not needed so the Sergeant left Shaw. Thiele and self behind. I took the opportunity of seeing the 50th Lieutenant Lackman has just arrived. I found that Arthur Riley (*survived*) had gone to the hospital suffering from some kind of fever. A letter arrived addressed to Jack Edwards (*survived*) from him (*a.Riley*) saying that he was progressing very well. Stan has returned from his Blighty leave having spent a very pleasant time in Scotland.

Monday 2 July 1917

The lads are still in the trenches. Getting on well with the quartermaster business which is on a small scale and is of course temporary. Weather is a bit wet again. Wrote a few letters.

Tuesday 3 July 1917

Parcel arrived from home, containing jam, honey, almonds, writing paper etc all in a very good state. In afternoon had a holiday and visited the 50th Battalion lads again. Found where Les had been. He had been wounded again in the Messines advance and has gone to the 1st South Africa Company. He had only been back from blighty about a month. Saw Sergeant Kellaway from Burra who knows Les well. Had a chat with Lieutenant Lackman who was pleased to see me and wished to be remembered to all the 3/50th lads who had been transferred to the 43rd Battalion when at Lark Hill. None of them have been killed up to date, although several have been wounded.

Wednesday 4 July 1917

Had **band practice in morning** and in afternoon had to brighten ourselves up and **go to see the King go by**. He came past in a motor and has been well in the shell area. His son, the **Prince of Wales, was in the car** next to him. I believe there was a governor in one of the cars. He was in civvy togs. The King looked very well and seems to carry his age very well, not looking 54 as I believe his age to be. The **road was lined with soldiers who gave him a cheer** as he went past. **Sent a parcel home which I hope will reach alright. It contains a Fritz cap, match box and gas helmet**. Wrote a letter to Clem.

Thursday 5 July 1917

In **morning had practice** and **put in an application for leave** to visit Steenwerck to **have photo taken with Stan and Horton**. Permission being given by the C.C. of the Detail Camp. I had a **hasty dinner and caught a motor transport** which conveyed me to within a short distance of the camp of the 50th Battalion. I bade them make haste and get an application in, which they did both being successful in obtaining it. We then **walked to Steenwerck a distance of some 5 kilometres** and on arrival looked for a good place to have our photos taken. We had each tried one of the other 2 photographers not being satisfied with the results deemed advisable to give this lady a trial. We secured a sitting and we have to return for the proof on or after Saturday. We strolled around and visited some of my acquaintances and they told me that a bomb had been dropped very close to where we have been billeted when in Steenwerck on the last occasion. **I bought an Onoto self filling pen** (see *History of Onoto Pens*) while there. It has a gold nib, 14 carat and cost me 21 francs or about 15/-. It is a fine pen and I am writing with it now. The **Russians are doing some good work having taken about 17,000 prisoners**. We finished up at a **egg and chip joint** where we wrote a letter to Mr Jennison all signing our names to the same. We **did justice to 3 eggs apiece and some bread and butter and tea**. We got a lift on the return journey and stopped to inspect some little railway engines where are used on a light railway. They have a number of little motor engines for getting close up to the lines. The **old Ford was used also fitted on a framework driving the wheels by means of a chain**. We could not help being amused to see how she was erected. On returning to the fiftieth camp we adjourned to the Y.M.C.A. and wrote a letter to Clem similar to Mr Jennisons. A soldier, a bit the worse for drinking, came in and after abusing everyone and everything bought two tins of fish and a packet of biscuits and proceeded to fill his interior. He gave a pressing invitation to us to help ourselves and fearing his displeasure if we refused we had a little. **He then informed Horton that he was unable to read or write and wished Horton to drop a line to his sister**, acquainted him with the fact that he was well. Horton did so. As my pass lasted only till 8.15 I found it advisable to get back to the detail camp and after a few short runs to gain time I reached my tent in ample time to hand in my pass, feeling very pleased with my outing.

Friday 6 July 1917

Had **physical jerks early in the morning** and as we were to practice a bit earlier, we had our breakfast at 8.

Saturday 7 July 1917

Practice in morning and in evening went to Steenwerck and **got the proofs of the photos which Stan Horton and I had taken**. We were pleased with the results. The day has been exceptionally hot and sultry, walked most of way down but had a ride a long way back. I lost my pass at the 50th lines, but my Lieutenant said it was alright when I told him. Plenty of thunder late at night and rain.

Sunday 8 July 1917

Been **raining all night**. One of the lads got wet through sleeping outside and never woke until he was wet through. We all had a laugh at him when he came in. In **morning we had practice** and in the afternoon a Commanding Officers inspection. We were inspected by the 44th Colonel. He it was who was quite indifferent to shells up at Museynes (*Messines?*) and showed Lieutenant McAnna to a good possey.

Monday 9 July 1917

Had a **bath in the morning** and **secured a clean shirt** which was acceptable. **Practice in the afternoon**.

Tuesday 10 June 1917

The lads are coming out of the lines. In dinner hour went and saw my mates. They were tired after their strenuous time in the trenches. Returned and **had to play on the parade ground for 2 hours**.

Wednesday 11 July 1917

We move to a camp a little further away to our left. Carried my instrument and put my rifle in for transport to carry.

Thursday 12 July 1917

It is **10 months ago today since we embarked from Australia** on the Seang Bee. When we bade friends farewell to go and fight the Hun. Since then many and varied experiences have been ours and many a comrade has fallen. It is to be hoped that the war is over before the next 12th July. **Have been issued with my 12 months good conduct stripe**. So far only one of the 3/50th who joined up the 43rd have been killed.

Thursday 13 July 1917

Went to Bailleul and had a look around. It was a **good distance to walk** but we took a short cut which took us in. The **wheat crops are looking very good**. Went from there to the 50th Battalion which were on the road to Armentieres. I secured a ride in a transport and arrived just as Horton was leaving to **get the photos from Steenwerck on a bicycle**. I found that Stanley had gone to Eng (*engineers*) early in the afternoon. He has gone to the training Battalion and has received his 2nd stripe. Sorry I missed seeing him. Saw Teddy Collins who was a mate of Doug Tregonning (*from Norwood died of disease 25-1-1917*) and also a man called Whittock? who was a Sergeant when at Mitcham. Caught a motor transport back to River Eglese? and then **walked to the camp**.

Friday 14 July 1917

Weather has been a little unsettled, very close and thundery.

Saturday 15 July 1917

More weather. Had a **look at a village which is situated about a mile and a half** from our camp with Teddy Krieg. He told me of his times that he had when in hospital. He was wounded in the raid at Armentieres sector. We walked on to **another village called Loches** where we had a look through the church there, it was a very pretty church. A little girl busied herself dusting everything. Went to a place and had a drink of coffee. The lady

could talk very good English and told us that she had 2 brothers at the war. I gave her a German bullet and she gave us two centime pieces.

Sunday 16 July 1917

See Jim Jacobs (*died of wounds 31 July 1917*) whose father is manager of the Mintaro slate quarry. Service in the morning and we had a fine address by Chaplain Mills. In afternoon went for **a walk to the village and had a sing song.**

Monday 17 July 1917

Nothing of interest occurred from this date till the end of week except Billy Lea from Farrell Flat. He has a brother at the war in the Light Horse. He told me a bit **of news about Farrell Flat** and showed me several letters from his friend there. They were all anxious the war would be over before he reached the front. We are in a nicely situated position on a level bit of ground surrounded by rising ground. On one side is **Kemmel Hill** from the top of which one can look right along the front for some distance. The big crater at Messines Ridge can also be observed (*see Messines Ridge British Cemetery*) from there. **The scenery is very pretty in these parts.** By our side flows the River La Deule (*Canal de la Deule?*) from which water is obtained for washing. I have a pair of Aussie boots again which are very good. **Band has been practicing for a horse show** to which we, in company with the other bands of the Brigade, went on Sunday. One night during the week while sleeping outside it commenced to rain and in my hurry to get in the tent, **tripped over the rope**, which caused the skin on the end of my toe to be nearly pulled off. It has been rather painful for some time. **Bought a pair of Puttees at Bailleul** one day when I visited that place. It is joined by a rather circuitous route through peasant's fields where peas, wheat, barley, beans etc are growing in profusion. There is almost **a total absence of fences** here, the neatest type being the hedge with a bit of barbed wire put between. The town itself is fairly large with a square with the usual cobble stone streets. **Bought a hack saw files etc for the purpose of making a few souvenirs out of Fritz bullets.** Intend to make some souvenirs from shell casing etc. One day I witnessed an unusual accident. A French mare has got its foot through the rain guard of the hooded sulky which is a vehicle used extensively over here. They are much heavier than the type used in Australia. **There were some fine horses at the show.** The brigade played in the morning and after dinner we moved back to our camp and the pioneer band took over the stand. **Witnessed planes being brought down at a distance of about a mile from the camp.** It dropped like a lump of lead. One day during the week we went to New Eglise (Eglise means church) and had a bath. While there a couple of **Fritz planes attacked our balloons and were brought down after repeated attempts on their part to get it alight.** One plane caught alight and the aviator jumped out of the plane and crashed to the ground. He was turning over and over until he was about a hundred feet from the ground and then he went straight down head first. The other was brought down out of control. **Fritz has a new powerful planed called the Gotha plane** which has two engines at 120hp each. He has 3 machine guns on it. **I have made several souvenirs from Fritz bullets captured at the Messines advance.** The guns captured in the advance have been removed from the town and taken further back. Several of the lads have a number of **German coins. Some of which are iron.** I see by the papers that **silver coins are being called in by the Germans.**

Tuesday 24 July 1917

Last **night Fritz sent a shell very close to the camp, pieces flying through the camp.** There has been a haze about for several days which has made it useless for the observation balloons to go up. Had a bath in the afternoon. The party that I was in **got a ride in a lorry to the baths** by the kindness of the driver. It is a means of getting from

one place to another used extensively over here. Last night there was a **concert given by the Battalion and our band** assisted by the 44th. played.

Wednesday 25 July 1917

Today we were to hold our sport. The 11 Brigade sport. The **bands were in attendance** and the first piece was played by the massed bands 41st and 42nd, 43rd and 44th Battalions. We all played the first piece and then the rest were played by us at alternate times. The 41st and 42nd played together and 43rd and 44th. The first event was 100 yards championship won by Paul Heincke of the 43rd. Walker of 42nd coming 2nd. Paul had only just returned from hospital with a twisted ankle. There were numerous events, even a **Siamese Race, Bomb throwing** won by 41st. Officers 100 yards. **Lewis gun competition** 42nd. **Running long jump** 18ft 6 ins won by Private White 41st Battalion. **Sack race** won by Private Wood. The day proved very bad so the meeting had to adjourn and we returned to our tents to get out of the rain.

Thursday 26 July 1917

The day provided good so the **interrupted sports were resumed.** The **22 yards** was won by Private Walker 42nd Battalion. Transport competition won by 43rd Battalion. There was also a **relay race.** The platoon competition 42nd Battalion. **High jump** was very good. Tony Miller from Clare was jumping and came 2nd, Private White of 41st being first at 5ft 6ins. There was also a mile championship. The most amusing parts of that was the **mule races** and a party who called themselves the Barn Owls. One chap representing Charlie Chaplin played his part to perfection. He was a splendid acrobat and could double himself into almost any position. **Another was masquerading as a girl and looked a bonzer girl.** One other represented himself as a monkey and another was a comedian. He had a turned up nose and wore a hard case. He came up and tipped our conductor off and conducted himself. One of our lads dressed up as a way back swaggie. He looked very realistic. The first prize was awarded to the comedian and 2nd to the man masquerading as a girl. The mile race was very laughable. They are an obstinate lot and it was very unusual to get once around before the mule would pull up and want to go some other way. It was by good luck more than good management that one can get hold of a good mule. There is also **an officers mule race** which proved highly amusing. There was some good riders among the officers who hung on well. One officer got thrown off and the mule trod on his hand and hurt his head a bit. The mule race on the whole was very amusing. The obstacle race was very trying. First the competitors had to **don their box respirators then scramble over a timber wagon then remove their helmets** from there they had to run about 100 yards in a bag, hop out and crawl under a big sheet of tarpaulin then crawl through the meshes of a big net. After which they had to pick up a sandbag of dirt and run about 50 yards with it to the post. In evening the prizes were distributed by Brigadier Canon? **We are quite in range of shells when these sports were held** but fortunately Fritz didn't get wind of it. In event a concert was given by the 3rd Div Pierotts, which were very good.

Friday 27 July 1917

Have received 3 letters from home which is very acceptable after so long a time between the last and this. It is believed that **one mail had been sunk.** In morning on account of two new players coming in Battalion, **I have been given the tenor horn to play** which belonged to Dick Thiele who has been sent to hospital with a bad boil on his knee. In evening played to the Battalion for about an hour.

Saturday 28 July 1917

Wrote several letters and **had band practice** and **sent a parcel home** censored by Lieut. Rose containing a **Fritz water bottle and a Machine gun belt and some German**

bullets done up as a souvenir. The officers will not take any more letters in for a few days.

Sunday 29 July 1917

It rained all the morning so church parade was not held. In evening attended short service held by Chaplain in the officers mess.

Monday 30 July 1917

Our guns have been very active for some weeks now, more so than for months. From Kemmel Hill one can observe the flashes of the guns for miles and miles. There will be something doing shortly. In morning the lads were all issued with the necessities for a push such as sand bags etc. The band were to be kept out of this push. **We played the boys off the grounds** in evening and knew that there were many then who would not hear us play again for such is the awfulness of war that it is almost sure to get someone.

Chapter 17 1917 31st July, the start of the Third battle of Ypres

Tuesday 31 July 1917

At three oclock this morning the lads went over on a great many miles frontage. It is the biggest push made in the war. The **guns roared without intermission and the flashes of guns lit the sky.** Several **who had being fortunately enough to get on Kemmel Hill said the sight was terribly grand.** The whole front seemed to be lit up with bursting shells. The night before last Fritz endeavoured to advance on the place where we were to go over. It happened that **the machine gun companies were just changing over at the time and so there was a double lot of machine guns in the line.** Fritz must have thought that every man had a machine gun. He never got near the lines. During the day news came dribbling in of the success of the push up to date of casualties and prisoners taken, Sergeant. (*Horace?*) Cadd in "**A**" **Company bayoneted 4 German machine gunners.** He had already won the military medal and would have earned some more decoration. **Every Officer in A Company has been wounded or killed.** One of my mates who came over with me called Victor Bowman (*of Millicent*) has been killed (31-7-1917). **Three of our machine gunners including Corporal Right was killed by one of our own shells landing short** which makes 4 our Battalion to my knowledge to be killed by our own shells. In **afternoon we had band practice** and then we were told that **we would have to take barbed wire up to the old front line.** It commenced to rain soon after and continued drizzling making it necessary to close all the tent flaps to keep out the wetness. At 7o'clock we fell in to go to the trenches. We were in charge of a signalling Lieutenant. A conveyance awaited us which took us part way to the trenches and then had to walk. The ground was very slippery and we made our way along a narrow tramline slipping and falling very often. On reaching a little dump **we loaded ourselves and then continued our way over the shell hole strewn ground, to the front line.** Before reaching there we had to enter the communication trench which had plenty of mud and slush in it. **Fritz sent over a number of shells but did not hit any of our party.** On the return journey, one of our lads was not well so he was sent to head of column that our pace would not be gauged by his. I took his rifle to make it easier for him and then ground was so slippery that it was with the greatest difficulty that we could keep our feet. **In crossing over a patch of barbed wire I tripped over a short barbed wire stay and the top which is pointed caught in my boot laces breaking them and then went through the tongue of my boot into my foot midway between the ankles.** It was rather painful and I feared that it would turn to blood poison. Passed a couple of our lads on the way back. I hear that a platoon lost one of the strong points, but intend to get it back again before the morning. Our conveyance was not awaiting us at the place where it was to meet us so **we walked on down to the first aid post,** where we had some **cocoa and**

biscuits which was very welcome. As I was about to leave one of my mates informed me that a lad called Robertson – nick named Robbie, a Lewis gunner was inside being dressed for a bullet wound and so I returned to see him. He said he was getting on very well. **A sniper had caught him, the bullet appeared and have glanced off his helmet and then went through his shoulder and pulled up – touching his lungs.** As I was in the dressing room I thought it well to having foot seen to. The doctor had a look at it and ordered some kind of a bandage to be put on. The Army Medical Corps (A.M.C.) put on about a pound of wadding and then a bit of bandages. “How do you expect me to get my boot over that” I asked. “Why, you don’t expect to get your boots on yet do you” he asked. I then thought it, must be of more impost than I thought. **I was then helped out to the waiting ambulance and in company with several wounded I was conveyed to Neuve Eglise (now known as Nieuwerkerke) where we given some refreshments.** I then received an inoculation against lock jaw. It burned considerably and made my arm swell up.

Wednesday 1 August 1917

By then, the morning was breaking. From there we were conveyed to the Casualty Clearing station. **I was examined by the doctor and then sent to a tent on a stretcher where I slept most of the day.** I wrote a letter to Gossage asking him to look after my pack for me. In evening we were carried out of tent and conveyed to a Red Cross train which was waiting near by. After we were all onboard the train started. It was still raining and would make the advance very much more difficult. We were ramped in stretchers 3 deep around the sides of the carriages. **At Bailleul we stopped and took on a big number of patients.** We started again and had numerous stops to let other trains pass. Our train travelled at a very slow pace. There were nurses on board and also a doctor and orderlies. We had plenty of rugs so we were comfortable as the lads wounds would permit.

Thursday 2 August 1917

Passed through Etaples (on the coast 32 miles south of Calais) about dinner time. Couldn’t see much of it as I was in the lower stretcher. **At about 9 o’clock, drew into Ruen** (Rouen is 110 miles south of Calais, 40 miles inland from the port of Le Havre) which appears to be a very sizeable place. We were to go to hospitals here and to Blighty (slang form of Britain used in WW1) in some cases. There were a **couple of wounded Fritz in one carriage.** They were put in an ambulance also. One was a huge fellow, he must have been 6ft 4, while the other was only a lad of about 14 years of age. **The majority of Fritz pleased to be taken prisoners and will do anything when caught, dig or carry the wounded back.** I hear the 43rd have regained a point which they lost for a few hours. **I found that the ambulance on which I was placed was bound for a USA hospital. I was pleased as I have been anxious to see the USA.** After about three mile side through the deserted streets we drew up at the hospital and the American A.M.C. (Army Medical Corp) proceeded to carry us into the tent from which we were allotted to different tents. I was to go to ward 16 but the bearers made a mistake and put me in (blank). **The orderlies gave me a much needed bath and I see and American nurse for the first time.** The doctor had a look at my foot and put a bandage on it. I had a piece of **bread and butter and cocoa** then oblivion until I woke to find it was nearly breakfast time.

Friday 3 August 1917

The rain appears to have stopped at last, which will make things less miserable in the trenches. **A couple of lads by my side have to go under the Xrays to locate shrapnel** etc. The lads have had the metal out. One was given gas only and was soon conscious

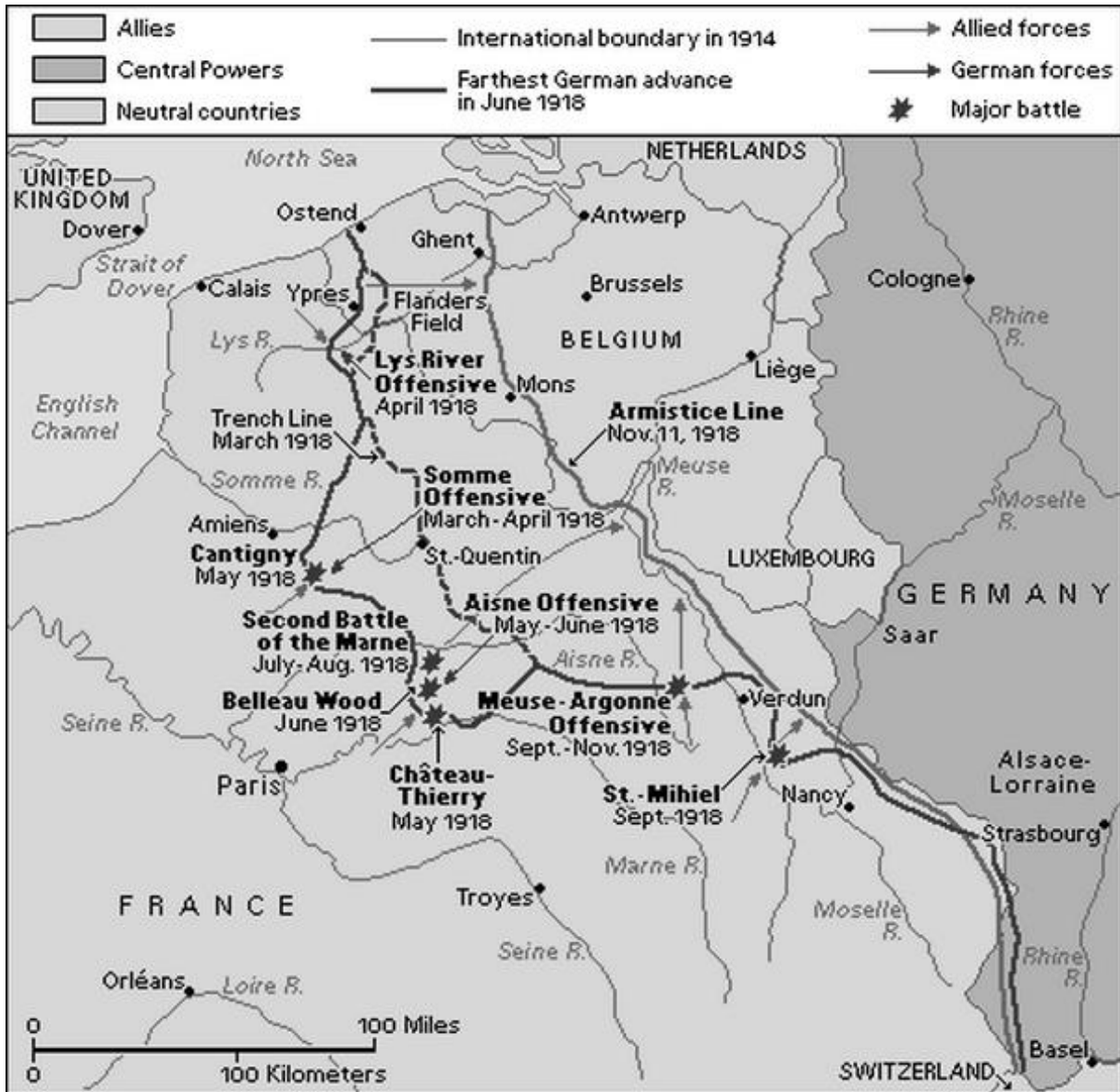
again. The other was fairly sick for a while. Wrote a number of letters. It is raining again. Some of our lads have been marked Blighty and are consequently pleased about it.

Saturday 4 August 1917

Woke this morning with a heavy rain falling. **Thinking of the boys in the trenches.** In morning nurse gave me a little task cutting wadding into sections for lysol (*mixture of cresols and soft soap, used as disinfectant*) bandages etc. In one roll I found and address of a miss Anne Lenthal of Chesterfield, wishing the recipient a quick return to health. I wrote a short note informing her of receiving the card and good wishes which were not addressed to any one in particular.

Hear that **about 6000 prisoners have been taken in this push** so far.

That is the last entry in Clarence's diary. The remaining 20 pages were not used, so it looks like his wounds took a turn for the worse. He died on 6th of October 1917 at the Buchy Convalescence Depot and was buried Boisguillaume Communal Cemetery in Rouen France., Rouen is where his last entry in his diary was made.



**Life in the rear:
Estaminets, billets, and the AIF on the Western Front, 1916–18
Jessica Bretherton**

The First World War is invariably characterised by the mindless slaughter of troops, the images of men running over the parapet, the mud, and the trench warfare. The major battles are celebrated and commemorated; places such as Fromelles, Pozières, Bullecourt and Passchendaele. However, in the daily lives of the soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) these were the exception. More common was the drudgery of war. Soldiers were in the front line for only part of the war, while much time was spent behind the lines resting in French and Belgian villages, in billets, and on bivouac. There soldiers had baths, repaired equipment, wrote letters, got drunk, and visited brothels.

This paper examines the lives of soldiers during rest on the Western Front, and will use unit diaries, soldiers' personal diaries, letters from soldiers to their loved ones at home, and published histories of battalions to shed light on this neglected aspect of the First World War. Letter and diary writing was a way for soldiers to stay in touch with their family and loved ones and to record their adventures in case they did not make it home, but it was also a common way for soldiers to pass the time. The content of these and diaries varied from everyday discussions about the social lives of a soldier's friends and family back home to harrowing accounts of trench warfare and humorous anecdotes of what soldiers got up to whilst on rest and leave.

Here the focus is on rest, although the very idea seems to have been a fairly contentious one among Australian soldiers. Despite the connotations, it was not free leisure time but simply a respite from the trenches and the hazards of the front line. There was still much work to be done behind the lines; sometimes soldiers were busier behind the lines than they were in the trenches. Manual labour featured heavily, and so did tedious tasks such as drill, parades, and repetitive training.

Rest was a factor the British Army had formally recognised to ensure all troops were running at their peak performance. When an infantry division occupied the trenches of the Western Front at any time, two infantry brigades were in the front line positions and one was resting. An infantry brigade of four battalions usually had two in the trenches and two behind the front lines billeted in farms, barns, and villages. The two battalions in the front line had two companies in the front and support trenches, with two in the reserve positions. The two forward companies had two platoons in the fire and command trenches and two in the support trench. About every eight days the two battalions in the front line changed places with the two battalions billeted behind.

Robert Stevenson's analysis of the 1st Australian Division details the number of days Australian troops spent in the trenches and at "rest". From a total of 1,683 days, the 1st Division spent just over half of those in operations which included support, and offensive and defensive operations against the German Army. The remaining days were equally divided between training and administration. The 374 days spent training included individual, collective, and combined training, while the other 423 were spent doing administration, moving between camps, and logistics.³ Of the 1,683 days spent on active service in the First World War, troops spent just 153 actually resting, relaxing, and enjoying the freedom of their own downtime.

While this is an analysis of just one of the five Australian divisions serving during the First World War, it gives an indication of how misleading the term "rest" truly was. It also

highlights the fact that soldiers spent only about half their time in the front line, with the other half devoted to labouring behind the scenes in what tended to be hard, menial work.

Australian troops often complained about the work they did during “rest” periods, and comments on the unfairness of “using rest for hard manual-labour” were common. Many troop papers published articles and comments on the unfairness of this, which they considered “a refined form of punishment to troops” and a “certain cure for men tired of being ‘up the line’”. Rest was also considered to be “a short term used to express endless parades, ceaseless polishing, burnishing’s and inspections”, as well as “a period of torture for infantry during which they are assiduously instructed in the art of cleaning buttons and shining mess tins, saluting by number and by request, and such intricate knowledge as the correct manner of pointing the toe in the ‘slow march’”.

Training:

Initially, there was a thought that idle minds would tend to mischief, and it was therefore best to keep the soldiers occupied at all times. However, endless hours of kit cleaning, mechanical labouring tasks, repetitive training, and parades led to resentment and a desire to “get revenge” on the administration that had devised this. In May 1916 Captain Louis Piggott, a Regimental Medical Officer for the 17th Battalion, wrote a letter to his mother regarding the work he performed during rest periods:

At present I am in what is called ‘in rest’ – that is, our division is miles away from the firing line, and out of the noise of the big guns, and at the present time ... I am in charge of a working party in the forest, making roads and cutting and loading timber. The division is supposed to be ‘in rest’, but you must not be misled by the term, as ‘in rest’ over here means hard work.

Piggott’s sentiments were echoed in the 2nd Brigade war diary, which outlined how the brigade spent its time in France throughout the quiet month of January 1917. Training reinforcements were carried out, along with refitting and improvements to the divisional fatigues: “latrines were entrenched – stables – corduroy road completed and several duck paths put down”.

Training formed a large part of a soldier’s time during rest, particularly in the earlier stages of fighting on the Western Front. Private Charles Harris from the 42nd Battalion lamented in his diary about the tedium of training before the battalion was sent up to the front line.

According to him,

“the training part of the joke was right”: Some fool got a notion that it might be a good [idea] to try and find the limit of endurance so they ran us over a mile of ploughed ground and then gave us some luke-warm tea. In the meantime my Puttee had become unrolled and was dragging along in the mud until some goat walked on it nearly bringing me down. Got home chaffed, footsore and weary with nothing worth mentioning to eat.

The 2nd Brigade unit diary does not record just how repetitive and dreary this training truly was. There are many entries that simply read “training recommenced” or “training continued”. One can assume these entries cover the basic, repetitive training. However, the unit diary does detail when an aspect of training seems to be out of the norm. On 9 August 1916 the diary reads:

“14.30 training continued. Aeroplane attack work. Position taken up on E. side of wood and flares and white sheet shown to aeroplane.”

The training syllabus between 29 May and 4 June 1917 includes company drill, platoon manoeuvres, musketry instruction, and range practice, as well as the construction and consolidation of strong points.

Billets:

While training and on rest, soldiers were often placed in billets; temporary lodgings provided to soldiers by the AIF when they were stationed behind the front lines. The troops were accommodated in a range of civilian buildings that had been acquired for military use. They were often farmhouses, but the ranks also slept in barns, halls, or whatever accommodation was available.

The Field service pocket book 1914 outlines the requirements for “quarters” and the correct procedure for acquiring and allocating billets, with the final point reading: “Tactical considerations have precedence over considerations of comfort. As many men and animals as possible are billeted, and the remainder bivouac.” Sometimes billets were not available, and soldiers were required to bivouac – set up a temporary shelter constructed of whatever materials the soldier could find. These sometimes included tents, but could also be a soldier’s overcoat, branches, or leaves. The great variance in the standard of billets provided during the war was often dependent on location and the period of the fighting.

While the soldiers were still in Egypt awaiting transportation to France they were told they would be billeted in houses with French civilians. This was great news to the men, who were looking forward to dining “with a charming mademoiselle beaming upon us”. But the reality of the fighting in France was vastly different to what the men expected. Troops often found themselves in sheds and barns, forced to steal straw to relieve their discomfort. Corporal Ivor Williams from the 21st Battalion wrote in his diary in March 1916 that after arriving at their allocated billet they found there was no room, so they had to “march back a mile to the next village (Rincq) where we were billeted for the night in a barn. It was very cold.”

Another entry reads:

“We are feeling stiff after last night. The billeting officer did not have room for our section so had to sleep where we could.”

It wasn’t always bad. At Ebbilinghem, Williams wrote: “Here we were billeted in a beautiful Chateau, the grounds of which were simply lovely.” More often than not, however, the conditions in these temporary lodgings were considerably poor. In October 1916, for example, the 2nd Battalion spent the night at Pommier camp: “Conditions extremely bad only cover for 20% troops and ground ankle deep on mud, no drainage”. Lance Corporal Albert Coates recorded sleeping “on the footpath in my overcoat” and camping “in a tent in the farmyard”.

This was not the case for officers, who were often billeted in the relative comfort of civilian houses. Lieutenant Fred Appleton of the 14th Battalion wrote to his sister Vera in July 1916, boasting how he was “again fortunate in my Billet I have a nice big bed to sleep in; most of the others are sleeping on the floor in other Houses”.

Captain Louis Piggott similarly wrote of the “fairly decent place, with a comfortable room” in which he was billeted in the final months of 1917. He wrote that his servant, who cooked his meals in the kitchen, also slept in the house. The house had a fire which was “quite a boon ... you can get your clothes dried at night”. Piggott acknowledged that his men’s lodgings were

“not so comfortable as things might be. This is just a small country village of a few farm houses; you can’t expect much. I have done all I can to improve their condition”.

Billeting was one of the main forms of civilian interaction for many soldiers. Piggott, as a billeting officer, wrote to his mother of how most of the French were very obliging in providing assistance for billeting. However, he noted there were some who “would not put themselves out in the slightest to give any assistance in billeting”. Piggott expressed his

annoyance with these people, writing, *“They don’t realise that the very men they are refusing to take in are the men who are keeping the enemy from their doors.”*

While some found the French obliging, other Australian soldiers questioned French hospitality. In one billet, a 24th Battalion soldier wrote of how an “old Flemish farmer makes a fuss because some of the men bathe their sore feet in his duck pond. The lads threaten to raid his orchard if he does not display a little more hospitality”. The farmer also put his son on guard duty in an attempt to prevent the troops smoking cigarettes whilst on the hay, to no avail. Some Australian troops had their suspicions about the French civilians. Charles Harris described the civilians in Armentières as: “A more or less homogenous population with a large proportion of German sympathisers. They are mercenary, dirty and dishonest.”

The French met the Australian soldiers with varying degrees of welcome. Sergeant Major Norman Ellsworth of the 2nd Field Artillery Brigade documented his first opinions of France and the French. For most Australians, France stood in stark contrast to the slums of Egypt, but for Ellsworth they were somewhat comparable:

“The houses & shops seemed very untidy, & in fact, put me in mind of portions of Cairo, but of course the people are ever so much cleaner in their appearance than the Egyptians, & they greeted us cheerfully.”

Ellsworth also commented on the number of war widows and family members the troops saw dressed in black.

Despite his initial reserved enthusiasm for the French, only two weeks later Ellsworth wrote again to his mother, grumbling that they were dirty, and that their town stank of fish.³⁰ He noted that the towns were busy places, with clothing and munitions factories dominating. Women worked there, as most men were off serving with the army. He wrote of the French women that he saw “nothing in the shape of beauty, except an Australian Nurse”. Ellsworth also complained about the conditions of the rest camps, saying that of comforts there was “not so much as a newspaper”.

Ellsworth went into Amiens one day and wrote in detail of his trip and of the meal he received: “

Had sardines for our first course at dinner; – fish omelette for our second; fish fried for our thirds, & fish boiled for our fourth, & when the woman brought us salmon for the next, I got up & walked up & paid my bill & cleared out.”

Ellsworth described this as a meat-less day, although he did not indicate if this was because it was a Friday in a Catholic area, or whether the establishment was simply unable to obtain meat.

Ellsworth also wrote of the sites in Amiens. He went to the cathedral, said to be one of the finest in the world, but Ellsworth was very much put off by all the “Roman Catholic ‘tommy rot’ & candles & all that stinking incense business”. Ellsworth’s regard for Catholicism did not increase upon witnessing a solemn requiem for dead French soldiers in one of the villages he visited. He wrote of the “ridiculous nonsense” that the priests engaged in, comparing the procession with a “Gipps show in Egypt”. Ellsworth’s records do not indicate his religion, so it is hard to tell if he had a particular aversion to all religions, or just Catholicism.

As an artilleryman, Ellsworth appears to have spent most of his time in France at the training bullring at Étapes, and was continually moved between units. He wrote mainly of his experiences behind the line and not about the action in the front line. Perhaps he could not bring himself to write about the traumatic experiences of the tasks he performed as an artilleryman, or perhaps he did not want his mother to know the truth. It is also possible that he may not have spent enough time at the front to have anything of significance to write about.

Interactions with civilians:

Despite grumblers like Ellsworth, some soldiers became quite close with the children and wives of French soldiers. In November 1917, Sergeant Edward Gilmore of the 6th Australian Tunnelling Company was incensed when German shell-fire caused a number of casualties among a group of French civilians. He wrote in his diary how his blood would boil when a German shell would come over and he had to witness French women and children running down the road to the dugouts. However, on one occasion a house was shelled, and Gilmore witnessed a little boy and girl running out of the house afterwards, holding a three pound piece of red-hot shrapnel shouting, "Allemand no bon!" ("Germans no good!") Gilmore was impressed that the Germans could put no fear into the French children.

The children's fathers were invariably away fighting with the French army, and they lacked father figures. Conversely, Australian soldiers who had children, or else nieces and nephews or younger siblings of their own, missed them dearly, and in some sense "substituted" French children for their own. Children were the embodiment of innocence, and allowed soldiers to get some distance from the front line, albeit briefly. Corporal Williams wrote of one day in which they had "organised games and had some great fun with the French kiddies."

Estaminets:

Despite the poor standard of many billets and bivouacs, and the boredom and tedium of training and fatigue parties, life behind the lines brought soldiers into contact with civilians, and with the simple pleasures in life. One of the most greatly appreciated aspects of rest was the estaminets – shabby French cafés that served wine, beer, eggs, and chips.



Alcohol was the main attraction of the estaminets. Drinking was a pastime that many soldiers had enjoyed in Australia, and was one of the few luxuries Australian troops could enjoy when billeted behind the front line. Aussie, a newspaper the soldiers published for themselves during the war, included the following poem, entitled *In billets*, in their June 1918 edition:

*You say we're mad when we strike the beer!
But if you'd stood in shivering fear
With the boys who bring the wounded back
Cross no-man's land where there ain't no track
You'd read no psalms to the men that fight!
You'd take to drink to forget the sight
Of torn out limbs and sightless eyes
Or the passing of a pal that dies.*

Indeed, some soldiers sought to forget traumatic experiences through alcohol. For some, religion was of little use and drink was a much better solace.

Charles Harris often wrote of his drinking in estaminets. One diary entry read, *“As fast as the various Madamissiolers (sic) we visited could pour it out we drank it, irrespective of colour or quality.”* After drinking about 50 francs’ worth of alcohol, Harris and his mates left one estaminet for another, where “there were several girls, a lot of Tommies and an accordion”. The tale continues with Harris waking up in a stable surrounded by animals, and stumbling back to his billet half-naked to get a lecture “on the evils of drink and the bad example I was setting young fellows like Clarke and Warren. Two young buggers by the way who drink a damn sight more than I do”. Harris also wrote of a separate occasion when most of the platoon, including his sergeant “got beastly full”. The platoon’s antics included climbing up and falling down the stairs repeatedly, cleaning muddy boots on other people’s clean blankets, can-can dancing for the French civilians, competitions to vomit into a biscuit tin, and climbing up onto the estaminet bar counter to sing.

Estaminets also offered the prospect of flirtation with French women, as well as the potential for sex, including with prostitutes. Harris wrote of his experiences with “the girls who come around hawking”, and believed all it would take was a little payment for him to be right to go home with them. However, he discovered that this was often not the case; he felt it was because he was not an officer, nor could he offer enough money. He wrote of one brothel, describing it as an “imitation paradise” – however, it had a mounted guard on it and it was reserved for officers. “Selfish brutes”, as Harris saw it.

This diary entry is quite rare, as not many soldiers wrote of their encounters with women, whether they were prostitutes in brothels, or “amateur” women who believed a “loosening of sexual relations promoted the winning of the war, or was, in a way, a patriotic act”. These women frequented streets, hotels, cafés, and bars.

The Official history of the Australian Army Medical Services 1914–1918 details that, between 1916–19, 13,105 Australians were admitted to field ambulances with venereal infections, including syphilis, gonorrhoea, and a number of unspecified diseases. This number made up 6.19 per cent of all admissions from 1916 through to 1919. It was of huge concern to senior Australian commanders, as venereal disease was “creating medical problems which occupied the attention of the medical staff to the detriment of more important matters.”

After it was established that chaplains appealing to the men to remain abstinent on religious grounds was “worse than useless”, medical officers gave more practical advice to soldiers. Every month all ranks were lectured to by a medical officer who detailed meticulous accounts of diseases, as well as measures for their prevention. The lectures also included a “denunciation of the idea that continence is ever harmful, or that incontinence is an essential attribute of manliness”. Further, men were warned of the dangers of drinking too much and having their judgement impaired. Men were offered a free prophylactic kit, given the opportunity to purchase condoms, and provided with an information card and instructions to head to the closest “early treatment” centre if they ran the risk of infection.

Entertainment:

Other than women, the soldiers had myriad entertainments with which to amuse themselves, and in some cases spent whatever period they could in having a good time.

Concerts, film screenings, church parades, carnivals, and dances were provided by both military and civilian organisations. These volunteer organisations, such as the Red Cross and the Australian Comforts Fund, aimed to provide “comforts” to Australian soldiers and to supplement army rations and personal kits.

They provided an estimated 12 million mugs of tea, coffee, and cocoa to soldiers leaving the trenches: “No charge whatever was made to the men for comforts, with underclothing, eatables, drinks, smokes, amusements, &c., all being provided free.”

In addition, 1,354,328 pairs of woollen socks were knitted by volunteers and shipped to Australian soldiers in Europe.

Many soldiers were grateful for the escape these organisations provided from the drudgery of war. Corporal Williams wrote in his diary on various occasions of the entertainment provided by the Australian Comforts Fund, which included a Vaudeville show, gramophone records, a free cinema for the troops and “an open air service held by the finest Padre I have met commonly known as “The Father of the Aussies”.

The soldiers themselves also put on many concerts and plays whilst on leave. The Canadians at Winnipeg Camp constructed a large corrugated iron concert hall, which the Australians often used when in the vicinity. One night the soldiers put together a skit entitled A night in Cairo. The actors blackened their faces with paint, and used the transport section’s mascot – a monkey – to portray scenes from Egypt.

Their play was completely unrehearsed, with the actors ad libbing on stage. The show reached its pinnacle “when the monkey attacked the actors” at which point the play became “decidedly entertaining – for the audience, at least”.

Often, during these performances, “good-looking youths were selected to impersonate the lady characters”. These concerts were often comedic, and invariably satirised command and the state of the war. Cinemas were also established. Battalions would be marched to the Loker theatre, with the admission fee paid out of the regimental funds. At other times the YMCA also entertained the troops at cinemas.

Most battalions had a band, with performances sometimes held in the village square for the amusement of troops and civilians alike. Sergeant Major Ellsworth wrote in a letter to his mother:

We have a fine Tommy Div band play in the beautiful woods that are by, & they comprise of English professionals, & gave us a rattling programme last night ... I did enjoy it & am eagerly awaiting their next performance.

Hygiene:

A simpler pleasure granted to soldiers behind the lines was the opportunity to have a bath and get a clean uniform. Mass bathing tubs were constructed from brewing vats. Soldiers exchanged their infested clothing for freshly disinfected and fumigated items, although they were patched and threadbare. Lieutenant David Caldwell, of the 27th Battalion, wrote about the bathing process:

We are fairly well looked after here; we get a good hot bath & a change of clothing at least once a week. We strip & get into a giant big hot bath about 20 at a time & my word you do feel alright afterwards especially if you have just done about 12 days in the trenches.

Corporal Ivor Alexander Williams of the 21st Battalion seemed to have a different opinion of the baths, perhaps because he was an NCO rather than an officer. He wrote in his diary that the baths were “really insults to the name”. Jam tins with perforated bottoms were used, with the water slowly trickling through. After the initial tin, the soldier then soaped

himself up, before another pint of water was released. If a soldier missed the second round of water, he had “to wipe the soap off with his towel” and then clean clothes were issued. Williams wrote of the disappointment of getting a different set of clothing, “because now one has just got rid of all the old ‘Intruders’ out of his shirt (now 3 to 4 or even 6 weeks old) so one has to start and exterminate the new breed”.

These everyday activities were sometimes documented by officials. An official war photographer took an image of Private Verdi Schwinghammer of the 42nd Battalion and his mates standing around in an old barn, shaving and “chatting” – the process of removing body lice from one’s clothing. This was quite a relaxed, jovial time amongst soldiers.

These instances of basic hygiene seem to rate very highly in most soldiers’ opinions. Almost every bath was mentioned in many men’s diaries. The process of washing the mud and grime away can be seen to represent the washing away of the horrors of battle this brief return to cleanliness, to normalcy, may have reminded soldiers of the lives they once lived.

In addition to bathing, being able to go for a swim was much appreciated by the men. Not only was it relaxing, but with the shedding of clothes all ranks appeared much the same. At these swimming places, senior officers and commanders who were not well known to their troops “found themselves addressed as ‘Diggers’, and were fortunate if they were not accorded less complimentary attention”. Most officers enjoyed these informal interactions with their troops, and many would go to great trouble to disguise their ranks so they would not be recognised.

Sport:

Sport occupied much of the soldiers’ time in rest. Indeed, in the latter stages of the war it became a part of formalised training, with sports played after lunch during periods of rest. Informal games between friends or inter-battalion competitions were vital for morale and esprit de corps.

In the AIF sport developed a competitive spirit and camaraderie, and competitions were followed by all in the battalion. Each unit had their own team, and battalions carried their colour to the field, marched to conquest to the music of their bands, and endeavoured to uphold their reputation. During the winter of 1917–18 “football competitions were the supreme interest behind the Messines front”, with the men “more keen on their football for the moment than anything else in the world”.

Sport also played an important role in breaking down the dehumanising and bureaucratic barriers existent in military life. British troops often remarked on the Australians’ casual disregard of rank when playing sport. One battalion diary read: matches between the officers and NCOs provided keen enjoyment for the troops, who relished the privilege when “barracking” of calling the officers by their Christian names or nicknames. Even the acting CO was not exempt from the popular ... the Diggers employed all their powers of humour in supporting both sides.

Such sports allowed a brief mental escape from the stress and horrors of war; indeed, “most of the men were playing football within half an hour of finishing a heavy march a fortnight in the trenches”. It was eventually acknowledged that if rest periods were to be of any value to the men they must be provided with moments of both physical and mental rest. Sports and games provided this mental relaxation, as well as reminding men of their

lives before war, when the outcome of a match may have been their only concern. Charles Harris wrote:

We played the 41st football today (13/3/17) and it resembled water Polo more than football – right between one of the goalposts there was a lake of water and it ran back about 25 yards. We played a good hard game taking everything into consideration.

Invariably, sports would lead to gambling, and this was present at the rest camps. Some soldiers adopted the role of bookmakers, laying odds for events, and this element of speculation added to the excitement of the match.⁸⁰ Once again, playing sport and having a gamble were all welcome relief from the horrors of the front.

However, not all rest camps were exciting. Sergeant Edward Gilmore of the No. 6 Tunnelling Company wrote in his diary:

“Slept all day and went for a bit of a walk during the night. The town is like the rest, nothing to do in it but watch people drink beer.” The next day’s entry reads, “Been writing letters all day long.”

Exhaustion in the AIF:

Rest was essential to the soldiers’ morale and fighting ability, and provided a mental respite from the routine of the front line; moreover, rest allowed soldiers to have a bit of fun during an otherwise horrific war. It is clear from events in 1917 and onwards that soldiers believed downtime to be crucial to their survival.

The repeated offensives of 1917 began to sap the energy of the AIF, with many men becoming depressed over the long periods they had spent in the trenches – longer than those of the British. Under normal circumstances, divisions were usually granted rest before they reached breaking point. Despite the perceived durability of the troops, there was a limit to what they could take, and exhausted men needed to be given adequate time to recover. It appears commanders on the ground were fully aware of this as, following intense periods of battle, soldiers in rest were given more genuine rest time instead of training.

The unit history of the 24th Battalion reads:

The Australian Divisions had been fighting strenuously since they were thrown in on the Somme early in the spring to stop the German swoop on Amiens, and now that the summer had passed, and the German army, like the leaves on the tress, was falling into decay, it was felt that the Australian Corps could well afford to take a rest.

Towards the end of the war, division generals were requesting additional leave for their divisions from General Sir John Monash, the Australian Corps commander.

Regimental officers were so concerned that they believed “any chain of mischances increasing the burden [on troops] might precipitate a local mutiny”. Monash wrote that he was “compelled to disregard the evident signs of overstrain which were brought to my notice by the divisional generals and their brigadiers”. He believed “six days’ rest and a bath restores the elasticity of a division. The troops are not tired – a little footsore”.

Some of these “footsore” troops mutinied. The 59th Battalion was relieved on 14 September 1918 after a week of continuous fighting, and no sooner had the men reached their bivouac and settled down to sleep than they were summoned to the line again. Three platoons refused to return, and their officers supported them, believing these actions were the only way to “impress the higher authorities with their needs”. This refusal was eventually overcome.

In a separate incident, the 6th Battalion mutinied over lack of rest, refusing to move from their bivouac site upon learning they would be returning to battle. Men from other

companies learned of the mutiny and joined in; all up, 119 men disappeared. These men were all tried, and “with one exception, found guilty, not of joining in a mutiny, but of desertion”. What happened to the mutineers afterwards, although mutiny was a capital offence in the AIF, they had their sentences commuted to hard labour.

Official historian C.E.W. Bean believed that Monash “was right to work his troops to the extreme limit of their endurance, which normally is beyond the limit to which men themselves think they can endure”. He went on to say that the value of armies depended greatly on their ability to hold out the longest, “withstanding strain, toil or exhaustion in perhaps unbelievable degree and for an unbelievable time”. Some would disagree: rest may seem frivolous, carefree, and at times against the very values of the Australian Imperial Force, but this crucial psychological rest from the front line could very well have been the only thing holding the entire AIF together.

Despite the large role rest played in a soldier’s experiences of the First World War, there is still little known about it, though exhibitions such as the Australian War Memorial’s Remember me: the lost diggers of Vignacourt, and the proliferation of First World War publications in the lead up to the centenary, may change this fact.

Australian soldiers on the Western Front spent a significant portion of their time in the rear, whether in training or at rest. Here soldiers learnt valuable new fighting skills and formations, but they also had crucial mental breaks. Although not restful, manual labour tasks behind the line removed men from the drudgery of trench warfare. While in rest, soldiers also got the opportunity to clean up and be issued with new clothing. Soldiers could sleep, read, and write letters to loved ones back home. Men were sometimes able to visit local villages and see the sites. Food and alcohol were popular pleasures, as were women. Units, as well as civilian organisations, put together social events such as sporting competitions, theatre productions, and musical performances. These breaks were crucial to the fighting force of the AIF, as they allowed a brief return to normality for the troops and provided an increase in morale. Life in the rear played an extremely important role in a soldier’s experiences, and should be remembered as such.