

IE TCD MS 10822

WWI diary of Charles Howard-Bury, 1st November 1916 to 25th September 1917

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Nov 1st. Left Charing cross at 11.45 by the Staff train. Never before have I seen the Platform looking so gay – red hats everywhere. The crossing was a rough one from Folkestone and the deck was a very wet place. Owing to the raid a few days before we were well escorted by torpedo boats and cruises. The torpedo boats had a very poor time of it, being constantly completely buried by the spray. On arrival at Boulogne I found that I had to spend the night there and leave early the following morning. On the journey I met at lunch the “Second in Command” at Kew gardens and we had some very interesting conversations about plants.

Nov 2nd. A pouring wet morning. Left Boulogne at 7.26 a.m. by a slow train and then had to change at Etaple & St Pol. At St Pol we had nearly two hours to wait and so I went and had lunch in the town. On arrival at Aubigny our rail head, I found no arrangements made to get back, but got a lift in an A S C car as far as Avesnes and then managed to find a Divisional car which I persuaded to take me on to Berlencourt where the Battalion are in billets. It is a pretty but poor little village at the bottom of a valley and very wet.

Nov 3rd & 6th. Nothing of importance to chronicle. The days are mostly fine and the nights wet. It is extraordinarily mild weather too. The mornings we spend on a range that we have made in the valley, where all the companies can shoot and drill. The afternoons I either go for a walk or a ride. There is a clear chalk stream in this valley in which are some quite nice sized trout. The banks are marshy and just the place for snipe and it is a regular rough strip of country, full of interest and bird life. I rode over one afternoon to Grand Rullecourt and had tea with the 8th Batt, another day I had a very pretty ride through Beech woods, now a lovely colour. If we remain here any length of time we will have sports, boxing, rifle matches, paperchases, and all kinds of amusements for the men.

Nov 7th -11th. The weather is vile, it pours with rain nearly every day and the mud is now horrible. It is very difficult to carry on any training under these conditions. The Battalion has managed to get into

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the final of the Brigade football competition and every morning that we can get out at all we spend on the range shooting, doing physical drill and platoon drill. The men are now beginning to get very fit.

Nov 12th-14th. A finer spell of weather. We are having some very good concerts in the evenings now, the men are improving very much and the shows they give are quite excellent now. An inter platoon football competition is going on now for a barrel of beer and there is great keenness to win this. There are extraordinary numbers of partridges about in the fields – quite close to my billet, I put up a woodcock, a jack snipe, teal and two water rails, more ought soon to come in, if the weather gets colder.

Decr 4th. I have been too lazy to keep up the Diary every day as there has been very little to relate. There were many Brigade Competitions of which we won the football, boxing and cross-country

race, only losing the relay race. On the 23rd the whole brigade moved into Arras to find working parties for the 35th Div. In Arras we had very comfortable billets from which the Corps Heavy Gunners tried to oust us, but without success, though we had a hard fight to remain there, but the Town Mayor an old Rifleman was on our side and would not allow us to be moved. The Companies are out working all day in the K Sector making a trench tram line, improving the support line and working at deep dug outs. It takes me a good four hours walk to go round. The Bantams for whom we are working are the most comical little dwarfs, very dirty and unshaven and seldom reaching as far as my shoulder. Porter went away on the 28th on a C. O.'s cruise and I have been left in command since. A new pattern box-respirator arrived on the 1st and we have been busy fitting them and putting everyone through a gas chamber, they are a great improvement on the old ones. The weather has been consistently cold and foggy, the ground remaining frozen all day.

Dec 10th. Porter returned on the 5th and took over command. The heavy gunners tried several more times to come into our billets but without success. On the 8th we left Arras, starting in the dark at 5-43 a.m. and marched eighteen miles to Magnicourt. It was a nasty wet

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day and on arrival at the village, we found our billets occupied by a Company of R.E. On complaining to the Brigade, we got orders to turn them out. The R.E. left after a couple of hours. The billets were not particularly good. The following morning I received a message that I was to join the 7th Bt and take over command temporarily. In the afternoon I rode over to Sombrin some six miles away where I found them. There was already a Colonel there belonging to the Essex Regiment, but he had orders to go to the Royal Scots. What I saw of the Officers, they seem a very nice lot.

Dec 11th. The weather continued very wet and nasty. In the morning I was busy taking over everything, going round billets, seeing Officers and N.C.O's. There was also a certain amount of Office work to be done. In the afternoon I took a walk round the country and got very wet. We had a very cheery dinner party and did not go to bed till past one.

Dec 12th. Colonel Richard left this morning. I was very sorry for him as he was such a nice man. The weather is vile with a couple of inches of wet snow on the ground. Went for a walk in the afternoon to get warm. No parades out of doors possible.

Dec 13th. Usual routine. Went round the training grounds, watched the Musketry and company parades. In the afternoon I rode over to Magnicour and had tea with 9th Bt.

Dec 17th. Usual work, training, firing on the range etc. On Sunday we marched 8 miles to Beaumetz, where we relieved a Battalion of the West Kents. The billets seem very comfortable and better than at Sombrin. The rest of the Brigade have moved up into the line and we are now in reserve. The weather is beastly, rain or cold snow every day. Great news has come in about the French success at Verdun.

Dec 19th. Spent the morning reconnoitring the trenches that we are to take over on the 22nd. We relieve our 8th Bt and it was about an hours walk to their Headquarters. Frewen took me round the front line, which has been knocked in in several places. The trenches were however wonderfully dry, considering all the rain we have had. It

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was a very quiet morning; we have had more shells at Beaumetz than came over us when going round. On the way back I stopped at Brigade H.Q. where I had lunch. They were most comfortable & astonishingly close to the front line in a very comfortable chateau. On the way back it snowed hard.

Dec 20th. Very cold but bright and sunny. Rode over in the afternoon to Bernville but all the 9th Bt were out. In the evening Clarke came to dinner and we had a very amusing meal.

Dec 21st. Vile day, wet and cold. Pigs killed for Xmas.

Dec 22nd. We started about 10 a.m. to relieve our 8th Btn which were in the trenches near Bretencourt. It was a horrible wet morning, but about midday it cleared up. The relief was completed by 2 p.m. Our trenches were in fairly good condition and I went round in the afternoon and again in the evening with the General to examine the work on the saps and the wire in front of them.

Dec 23rd. Weather is very bad, trenches falling in everywhere. The heavy rain and thaw following after the frost have ruined the front line. I was round the line in the morning and again after dinner, investigating all the saps. The Boche was heard shouting and singing.

Xmas Day. A very showery day, but not cold. The mud in the trenches was very bad and everyone was hard at work trying to cope with it. Went round the line morning and evening and up the saps where I got extremely muddy and wet. Had a very good dinner in the evening and champagne. The night was very quiet.

Dec 26th. Wind from the East and a gas alert. Walked round the trenches with the General. Their state is rather better, thanks to the amount of work put in. The Boche have got gas in their trenches which they may let off at any moment so we must be careful. Much more artillery activity during the afternoon. Went round the line during the night. Extremely dark and pouring with rain. Returned home covered with mud from head to foot.

Dec 27th. Owing to the heavy rain in the night, more of the trenches fell in, but the day was really fine and sunny. Gas alert still on

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but no wind. As the Boche is supposed to have gas in his trenches opposite us, a shoot by the Heavies was organised for the afternoon from 2-4. It was a really fine shoot by the 6", 9.2", & 4.5". Thousands of rounds fired and much damage done to the Boche trenches. I think several gas cylinders were broken, as a green cloud hung about several places in their trenches for 20 minutes or more. A very fine fight in the air over our heads between some ten aeroplanes. The Boche seemed to get rather the best of it. A quiet night followed.

Dec 28th. A sharp frost during the night followed by a thaw. By 1 p.m. we were relieved by our 8th Bt. who arrived just in time to see a shoot by our heavies on the Boche front and support line. We went into billets at Riviere and have got very comfortable quarters. In the evening we all had our Xmas dinner – for the men pork and fresh vegetables, plum puddings, oranges and nuts and beer.

Dec 29th. The Boche retaliated by shelling the trenches we had just left all the morning. I walked round all the Keeps where we have small garrisons, which took up the whole morning as the furthest one was a long way off. It poured during the night and for an hour there was heavy shelling and gun fire.

Dec 30th. Very heavy rain – everything under water, but a quiet day. In the afternoon walked along to the Keeps and met the General on the way who came on with us and we then went to tea with him at Brigade H.Q. All the men out on working parties.

Dec 31st. A quiet day: all the men out on working parties. In the afternoon walked to Baseerre with Maurice and in the evening dined with the Brigadier. Very good dinner in comfortable chateau. On returning, at Boche midnight one shell came over which nearly caught us. We retaliated at our midnight with many. Rest of the night quite quiet.

Jan 1st [19]17. Quiet day. Was told I could wear Colonel's badges of rank. Walked round the Keeps in the afternoon.

Jan 2nd. A fine mild day. Walked round the Keeps and on to Agny where I had lunch with the 9th Bt. A draft of 18 men arrived in the

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afternoon and four Jock Officers in kilts to be attached to us. In the morning a raid was expected and we had to be in readiness but nothing happened at all.

Jan 3rd. Relieved the 8th Bt in the trenches. A daylight relief which was completed by 2p.m. Then I went round the trenches and found them in a far worse state than we had left six days before. The weather was very wet and everything had now fallen in.

Jan 5th. The last two days passed quickly. Ficheux Street was badly blown in by 5-9s which fired with great accuracy. Thanks to large working parties the condition of the trenches is much better.

Jan 6th. The Boche shelled Ficheux Street between 8 & 9 a.m. with great accuracy, blowing it in at several places. Went round the trenches and found them much wetter after a night's rain. A heavy bombardment in front of H Sector started at 11 a.m. 32000 shells from 12" downwards to be fired. We watched the show from the reserve line, also the smoke clouds on either side. There was not much retaliation and we had a quiet night.

Jan 7th. A cold day which turned to rain and it poured all night. Went round the trenches morning and evening.

Jan 8th. A little shelling on the right and near our old H. Q. at Riviere. A dug out fell in and buried several men. The trenches are very wet again. We got one man out of the dug out alive, but another is buried and after digging 24 hours we had not reached the body so that I am afraid there is no hope. Many of the dug outs are very dangerous now after all this rain. It poured with rain most of the night and the trenches are wetter than ever.

Jan 9th. We were relieved by the 8th Bt & the right Coy and one H. Q. got shelled during the relief. However there were no casualties. We did not get back to Beaumetz till 4-30 p.m. Clarke dined with us and was very cheery.

Jan 10th. Rode over to Simencourt to inspect billets there as Beaumetz

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has been shelled so much lately. Men's billets there are very good but Officer's poor. Snowed a little in the afternoon but a quiet day.

Jan 11th. Moved over to Simencourt in a snowstorm. Fixed the men up in good billets very soon. Officers billets all occupied by gunners and their staff sergeants. We worried the Town Mayor out of his life until he turned the sergeants out of officers billets and made the gunners close up. By night we had all managed to get some kind of billets and had settled down.

Jan 12th. Started at 11 a.m. to go to Paris and arrived there the following morning at 6 a.m. after a very unpleasant journey & march.

Jan 17th. Left Paris after spending a few very pleasant days there with my mother. The journey back was equally unpleasant and I had to spend the night at Frevent. Snow was about four inches deep and all the trains were late.

Jan 18th. Left Frevent at 7 a.m. by the light railway and got to Avesnes at 8.30 where my ponies met me. A very cold and slippery ride to Simencourt. It snowed most of the day but after lunch I walked up to the trenches and then went round the line which was very wet from the melting snow. The night was very dark and quiet.

Jan 19th. Another cold day. The snow is still lying on the ground and neither side like to fire their guns for fear of giving their positions away.

Jan 20th. Still cold and frosty. The trenches are drying up nicely thanks to the hard frost, 17o of it. The flares and very lights at night have a weird effect in the snow, and almost like the Northern lights. Very little shelling on either side opposite me, though there is much activity to the South.

Jan 21st. We were relieved by the 8th Bt who as usual came in for heavy shelling as soon as we had left. I think they expose themselves more. I heard the heavy Trench Mortar working during the afternoon. "Flying pigs" the men call them. We went back to our old rest billets in Riviere.

Jan 22nd. Still hard frost. Had much work in the Orderly Room all the

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morning and interviewed candidates for Commissions. Walked round the keeps in the afternoon.

Jan 23. Very hard frost and froze all day. Inspected a draft of 19 men and in the afternoon walked over to Agny to see the 9th Bt. They were in the middle of a relief. Put up four mallard on the way and a large covey of partridge.

Jan 26th. Very cold weather. The whole time the jug of water in my room has remained frozen solid, day and night. The sun shines brightly and with plenty of exercise the cold has not been unbearable. The men were employed in carrying, & in working parties the whole time.

Jan 27th. Still bitterly cold but sunny. There is however a strong N. E. wind which is vile. To-day we relieve our 8th Bt in the line. They have not had a very quite time as the Boche have brought up some 90 lb trench mortars. Relief went off quite well and in the afternoon I went round the line. The going is very good as everything is frozen hard.

Jan 28th. A very cold night followed by a bright sunny day. Went round the trenches during the morning all very quiet there. In the afternoon walked over to de Calry to see him about the raid.

Came back along the support line to see the damage done by Trench Mortars during the afternoon. It was not very serious however. My servant Thorpe is sick.

Jan 29th. Cold frosty weather and a quiet day and night.

Jan 30th. More firing than usual during the night and at 7 a.m. the Boche Trench Mortars opened fire and for about two hours there was much stuff flying about through the air. Most of it fell just to our left. We had no casualties. I went round later to see the damage and saw our heavy Trench Mortar firing. It is a colossal engine and the "flying pigs" could be followed all the way through the air. On hitting the ground they make a huge hole and the earth is shot up several hundred feet into the air. One poor fellow had both his feet blown off by a Vane bomb in the afternoon. Went round the trenches again at night. It was snowing slightly – everything was very quiet.

Jan 31st. Still cold and frosty. A very quiet day and night but about

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an inch of fresh snow fell.

Feb 1st. Very cold. Rather more activity on our right Company, and the head of Forrest Street was blown in. Sounds of mining also heard. We are to be relieved tomorrow by the W. Ridings.

Feb 2nd. Better weather still but the trenches are at least dry. The right Company was rather heavily shelled early in the day and we had 3 casualties. The three front coys were relieved alright by the W. Ridings when they started to shell our right Coy front & sending over several hundred 5 -9's & 4 -2's & causing several casualties to the W. Ridings. Our relief was completed about 4-30p.m. On the way back we had tea at Brigade H.Q. with De Calry and then went on to Simencourt where we spent the night.

Feb 3rd. Dry weather still. In the afternoon we marched to Sombrin about 9 miles. A fine frosty march with bright sun.

Feb 4th. 270 of frost at night. I met Humphrey Butler and dined with him at Corps H.Q. A large building and very cold but the dinner good. The Battalion is sent off on working parties to Mondecour Ivergny, Le Souich & Lucheux, leaving no one here, so that now I shall have nothing to do and may very well go on leave.

Feb 5th. Still better weather. A little fresh snow has fallen. In the afternoon I bicycled round some of the detachments. Was very tired afterwards as I had not bicycled for a long while. Had quite a dinner party in Mess, 10 turned up.

Feb 6th. Office work all the morning and in the afternoon came by car to Boulogne in under three hours. Bitter drive through the snow in N. E. wind. Crossed the following day.

Feb 20th. After waiting three days at Folkestone was at last able to cross. There had been a very thick fog all the time and the Naval authorities would not let the boats sail, so I had to hang about at Folkestone. Officers of all ranks there are not allowed to be served with drinks if they are going to cross the following day – are we not childish. Many Generals were there unable to obtain even a whiskey and soda. Crossed at last in the 20th good crossing but

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wet and foggy. With great luck I managed to get a place in a car and so got back to Sombrin by 9 p.m. No bad going as I did not leave London until after 11 a.m. and owing to the fog, driving was very difficult.

Feb 26th. Still at Sombrin, where I have now got two companies. Went into Dainville one afternoon with the Brigadier to have a look at Trench Wireless. Quite interesting. This afternoon we had a show with the Flying Corps practising with a contact aeroplane – flares, ground sheets and signalling lamps.

March 15th. Nothing of interest to record during this period. Our headquarters remained at Sombrin while the four companies were scattered at Saulty and Mondicourt. At the latter place there was a most incompetent ass as Town Mayor who was constantly causing trouble. On the 14th the 9th Bat arrived here which was a great pleasure; one of their companies arrived here a few days before to practise for a raid. My old Coy A coy. On the 15th we collected the whole Battalion together at last but moved off early the following morning to Simencourt. Our mess at Sombrin has been the most comfortable one that we have had for a long while and we made many friends among the French and the Flying Corps while here.

March 19th. On the 16th we marched to Simencourt, where we were all put in huts. The men are quite comfortable but the officers are not; however we managed to make our beds and chairs and gradually settled down. While here news came in of the Boche retirement on our front and we had orders to stand to, ready to move at two hours notice. This order was cancelled on the 19th. There is as usual much trouble over a football field and training ground. Meanwhile we have taken one until matters are settled. Deluges of rain on the 19th which makes the mud worse than ever.

March 22nd. This weather has turned bitter and for three days the ground has been white with snow, with icy N. E. winds. There seems to be no spring in this country. On the 21st we marched in a snowstorm to Arras arriving there after dark where we found a horrible congestion of traffic. However we settled into billets alright.

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March 23rd. Another bitter day. Heavy shelling during the night and all day with our guns. Tomorrow we are to move up into the line in support, so I went and reconnoitred our positions. Our H.Q. are in a cave, part of an amazing system of caves all lighted with electric light along which we wandered for three quarters of an hour. Our entrance to these caves came out in no man's land. I wandered round part of our old front line and the Boche line: it was a terrible sense of desolation everywhere. Returned back above ground. Very busy all the evening making arrangements for the move and was very glad to get to bed.

March 24th. Very hard frost with an icy N. E. wind when I was woken up at 4 a.m. by a very heavy bombardment. During the day we relieved the D.C. L. 1 who were holding our old front line in support. My head quarters are in the Bluff cave, where we made ourselves very comfortable. There are 65 feet of chalk about us, so we feel very safe and scarcely hear any sounds of the bombardment. Our guns fire all day and the Boche guns all night. The transport did not arrive up till midnight. I spend some time exploring these caves which can hold 7 or 8000 troops. They were only discovered quite by accident and date back to 1630.

March 25th. The caves are very damp to live in and everything is clammy. In the morning I went up to reconnoitre the new front that we shall have to take over from the 8th Bt. To get there we had to

pass through a maze of shell holes and destroyed trenches. Up in the line it was quite quiet and we had very good views over Tilléy and the Harp and Neuville Vitasse. Parties were busy opening out the old German dugouts which had been blown in. During the morning we had 2 men killed by shell fire in Ronville. At night we had to find working parties to dig new trenches in front of the front line. I went up to visit them. It was a cloudy night with drizzling rain and so dark that it was impossible to see a yard in any direction. I lost my way and seeing a sentry of the 8th Bt asked him where the Preussin Wig was. He said he would show me the way and then said "Are you not Mr Bury"? I said "Yes" How on earth do you know me?" He said he recognised my

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voice as he had once been in my Company. I got to where the working party ought to be at last, but found they were not there so I went down into Coy H. Q. Barely had I got down before several shells landed on the spot that I had been a minute before, killing two men and wounding five. After waiting there for an hour and finding no sign of a working party, I started to go back. Shells were dropping all over the place: after a while in the inky blackness & drizzling rain, I lost my way and found myself wandering towards the German lines. Luckily I recognized the noise of our Batteries and turned back and made towards their flashes. After many tumbles in shell craters and wire entanglements I struck the Beaurains road and got home about 2 a.m.

March 26th. A nasty wet day. I barely left the cave all day except for a short walk in the afternoon.

March 27th. It snowed most of the morning. I walked up to our new H.Q. dug out [?out] of which seven mines were dug out and bombs out of the chimney flue. A certain amount of shelling especially near H.Q. After lunch I walked down the cave and through the sewers right into the Barracks in Arras – an astonishing walk. I tried to get a bath there, but they were too crowded. A good deal of shelling on the way back and many casualties I'm afraid. I had a bath in the cave before dinner.

March 28th. A frosty night and fine morning. We relieved our 8th Btn in the afternoon. This was done without trouble and I found our H.Q. in the Kreiger Stellung in a very deep dug out out of which five mines were dug. There is very little room to move in it and it was extremely draughty. We have little bunks to sleep in in niches in the wall. It was a very noisy night; heavy shelling all the time. Several shells fell on our roof but as we were 50 feet down, they did no damage. It was however very dangerous to poke one's head outside. The two Company H.Q. had also an unpleasant time and we had 2 men killed and 1 officer and 5 men wounded.

March 29th. I went all round the line in the morning to all the companies. We have a wonderful view in front and behind over the Boche lines. It was a fairly quiet day with intermittent shelling. The

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night was rather quieter and we had no casualties.

March 30th. Went round the Companies in the morning a trip which takes me about three hours. In the afternoon I went to reconnoitre some assembly trenches.

March 31st. A fairly quiet night. A few shells landed on our H.Q. A carrying party met an unlucky shell and we had 1 killed and 7 wounded. The trenches are in places very muddy. Spent all the

morning at the Brigade in a C. O.'s conference. Lunched with the 8th Bt in the caves & went round the line in the afternoon. Everything pretty quiet. We had to find a covering party at night for parties digging new assembly trenches.

April 1st. Went round at "Stand to" in the morning. All very quiet. A fine frosty morning. We were relieved by the 8/60th in the afternoon and returned to the caves. Had a large working party out at night, digging new assembly trenches. Slept very well in the quiet of the caves no sound of the guns.

April 2nd. Had a meeting of Coy Commanders to explain coming operations and to discuss arrangements. In the afternoon went out with St. Aubyn to reconnoitre dumps etc. A bitter wind – then snow. We soon became quite white from head to foot and there was about 2 inches lying on the ground. Went into Brigade for tea and as it was still snowing then, we came back by the sewers. Had working parties out again at night.

April 3rd. We have to shift from the Bluff cave into the Christchurch cave, which is much damper. A whole Brigade is billeted in the cave to-night. Our new H.Q. are not as good as the last and it drips everywhere from the roof.

April 4th. The bombardment started at 7-30 this morning. A terrific noise. The atmosphere of the caves grows worse and worse. A C.O.'s Conference in the afternoon at Brigade H.Q. which have also moved down into the cave, as Arras was being shelled. I watched the bombardment at night – a very fine sight, guns everywhere and a continuous roar.

April 5th. A beautiful morning. I came out to get away from the awful air in the caves and wandered up into the old German lines where I watched the bombardment. I could see all round in a great semicircle as far as

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Vimy. Everywhere our shells were bursting in a continuous stream of all sizes: the Corps on our left put up a practice barrage, a really astonishing sight and the noise perfectly deafening. In the evening we came out of the caves and marched to Dainville in order to make room for others in the caves.

April 6th. A disturbed night as we are surrounded by 15" Howitzers & 9. 2" 6 which fired all night; whenever the 15" went off, we were nearly blown out of our beds. In the afternoon we rode out to watch the bombardment. While having dinner the Boche put a few shells into the village and ruined my best pair of boots, these I had left in my room.

April 7th. After a very wet night, a fairly fine day. The bombardment still goes on and we watched it from the racecourse for a long time. In the evening we had a Concert for the men, A few shells came over, and caught some transport on the road.

April 8th. A hard frost at night but a fine morning for Easter Sunday. We move into the caves to-night preparatory to the attack to-morrow morning. It was the first warm afternoon that we have had and I was able to sit out in the garden and write letters. The Germans retaliated on Achicourt during the afternoon and blew up three large dumps of shells. In the evening we had to go through Achicourt and it was an awful scene of desolation, dead horses and broken limbers all over the road, blown up houses and houses all on fire with shells exploding every minute. We had to make a detour in the dark but the whole battalion eventually arrived safely in the caves without any casualties. There we spent a busy night giving out stores & bombs. The air inside was awful and no dry spot anywhere.

April 9th. The 3rd Division started the attack at 5-30 a m on our left and we emerged from the caves at 7-30 a.m., at which time our two Leading Brigades in our Division attacked the Harp & the Hindenburg line. We got to our assembly trenches with only three casualties. The Boche did not retaliate very much as it was raining at first and he could not see where we were. Later on it cleared up and I spent most of the day on top of the hill in the original German line watching the

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attack. From there it was possible to see the attack for quite ten miles to the North. Everything at first went well and the Boche were driven back further and further. Many prisoners kept coming in all day: they did very good work carrying in our wounded and even gave them their coats when they were cold. The second attack on the 'Brown' line was not so successful: the Cavalry had all come up in order to go through but the 43rd Brigade did not reach their objective owing to the 56th Div. failing to come up. Another soft job at home for some Brigadier I suppose. If only the 56th Div. had come on, we should have got the Brown line and the Cavalry could have gone through. As it was they had to go back again. It turned bitterly cold in the night and snowed hard. No one had blankets or great coats so we all suffered very much from the cold, as we had to hold ourselves in readiness to go forward and take the Brown line.

April 10th. We did not move during the night and all through the morning snow-storms and bitter winds continued. The ground is white everywhere and there seems to be no spring at all in this country. At 11 a.m. we received orders to move forward to the Blue line, which we did, suffering no casualties on the way though several shells came very near. I lunched in a German dug-out off German tinned rations which tasted very good but which made me very sick in the evening. In the afternoon we suddenly received orders to relieve the K.O.Y.L.I.s who were supposed to be in the Brown line. We advanced in Artillery formation towards where they were supposed to be, but after going about three quarters of a mile we came under machine gun fire from the right flank where the 56th Div were supposed to be. We halted for a while in a trench which we discovered, until we could spy out the land. Then on a heavy snow-storm coming on I moved up two Companies into the Brown line. The snow-storm afforded cover from the Machine guns for most of the way, but unluckily it lifted just as they were crossing a very thick wire entanglement and they had here about ninety casualties with Williams & F. T. St. Aubyn killed and three Officers wounded. Altogether in the day we lost seven and 100 men killed and wounded. The 8th R.B. came up in the evening

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in support and strengthened our line. We found a large German dug out full of bombs and stores into which we went: it was full of every kind of explosives and supplies.

April 11th. At 1 a.m. the General came round. I explained the situation to him. He quite agreed with me and considers that a further advance was impossible until the 56th Div had taken Hill 90. At 5 a. m. orders arrived that we were to attack again and push on through Wancourt. The 56th Div were to attack Hill 90 on our right half an hour before we started: the 7th R. B. were to push on on the left and the next Div on the left was to push on toward Guemappe. We protested. The Brigadier protested that Hill 90 must be taken first and that it was sheer murder to send us on as it was, but without effect. No one of the Divisional staff had reconnoitred the ground – their headquarters were ten miles away in Warlus, where they were quite safe. They wrote their orders there and refused to

be guided by the views of the men on the spot. I had no time to write orders and so sent the original order to Williamson who was commanding the two front Companies. The bombardment was to start at 6-30 and they were to retire a couple of hundred yards behind their trenches, as the bombardment was starting on their line. In retiring through the wire they suffered many casualties. The order luckily did not reach two platoons, who remained in the trenches all the time and who did not suffer a casualty. The bombardment was an absolute farce, about one battery firing all over the place. Several of our shells landed quite close to where I was and killed some of our men. Whitley started from Bt H.Q. with a Company and a half and before he had gone 300 yards, we realized that the 56th Div had not taken Hill 90 in fact they had not left their trenches and our men were simply mown down by enfilade MG fire. As soon as I saw what was happening and that it was madness to go on any further, I telephoned to Brigade and got leave to withdraw those that I could. I managed to collect 146, but Whitley was alas killed. He knew it before he started and that he was going to his death and he was found the nearest up to the enemy, a nice gallant fellow that he was and best of officers. A number remained out in shell holes all day and rejoined at dusk. The wounded had a very

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bad time, as the weather was bitter and towards and towards evening some two inches of snow fell. After dark we collected a large number of wounded and were then relieved by the 8th Bt and marched back in the snow to some trenches in the Corseul Switch line where we spent the night in the snow. We luckily got an issue of rum in the morning, as everyone was frozen. It snowed on and off during the day and we remained where we were until about 10p.m. when we were relieved by the 8th Durhams. The Boche had meanwhile evacuated Hill 90 and it was impossible to walk into Wancourt without any opposition. Our losses of 12 officers were therefore quite wasted thanks to our staff, who remained in safety and comfort far behind; for this they will no doubt get many D.S.O.'s and foreign decorations. We had a fearfully muddy walk back to Arras over all the lines of German trenches that we had captured. We found one man stuck in the mud and unable to move and brought him along with us after digging him out. We arrived at Arras at 2 a. m. where we went into billets. A good supper was awaiting us there after which we retired to bed.

April 13th. We slept most of the morning and I then had a good bath in the town which was packed with troops. In the afternoon we were taken by Lorries to Monchiet where we spent the night in huts. It was a very muddy and unpleasant camp.

April 14th. We spent the morning at Monchiet and in the afternoon marched back to Sombrin to our old billets. It was actually a fine day, but snow is still lying here in the shade.

April 15th. It poured all day. The Divisional General and the Brigadier came in the afternoon to see how we were getting on and to thank the Battalion for what they had done.

April 16th. A fine morning but wet all the afternoon and a deluge during the night. We had a C.O.'s Conference at Brigade H. Q.

April 17th. It rained and snowed all day. Has anyone ever seen such poisonous weather. God is certainly on the side of the Boches.

April 23rd. Weather very bad up to the 20th, then a little finer. Managed to get a little training done and also a football competition. Rode over several times to see the 9th Battalion. Also we played them at

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football. On the 23rd marched to Berles Aux Bois. It was only about nine miles. The village had been nearly destroyed by shell fire but there were a few houses remaining and in to these we went. We were told that we should be here for a week. Sir D. Haig passed through in the evening, and stopped and spoke to some of the N.C.O.'s. Some wild daffodils in the orchards the first signs of spring.

April 24th. We were woken at 4.30a.m. with orders to move at 6 a.m. so we had a very hurried breakfast: further orders changed the time to 7.30 a.m. It was luckily a fine frosty morning. We crossed our old line trenches and the German trenches near Ransart, then marched throu Blaireville to Ficheux, where we bivouacked in a field near a cage of German prisoners. Some tents arrived in the evening and we spent the night there. The situation in front had calmed down and the German counter attacks repulsed, so that we were nor required.

April 25th. A quiet but cold morning. In the afternoon marched to Mercatel where we stopped. We made some shelter by the roadside where we spent the night. Both Ficheux and Mercatel were once villages, but now are only topographical expressions. Not one stone remains standing upon another and every fruit tree or tree by the roadside has been cut down in wanton destruction by the Boche.

April 26th. Handed over command to Laye, as I am to remain out this time and he is to go in. So for a few days I shall have nothing to do. Rode into Ronville to the transport and then into Arras where Fuge found St. Aubyn and myself a comfortable billet. In the afternoon we wandered all round Blangy, looking at our old lines and the German ones. A shell blew up a huge dump of ours at St. Laurent. Explosions were going on all the afternoon and night. It was a very fine sight.

April 30th. A quiet time in Arras. The Battalion was in reserve and has at present nothing to do. No casualties till the 29th when a bomb explosion killed and wounded twelve. Relieved the 9th R.B. in the front line night 28th-29th.

May 3rd. Delightful spring weather. The Battalion was in support during the big attack this morning. The two 8th Battalions attacked and were very successful at first, but were counter attacked and driven back to

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their original position. Losses were very heavy and the attack all along the line seems to have been equally unsuccessful. We motored into Doullins to buy canteen stores.

May 4th. Lively weather. A huge ammunition dump blew up in the evening and went on all night. Gas alarms and frequent shelling completed the entertainment.

May 5th. Rode up to the line all quiet there.

May 6th. Rode up to the Battalion which I found in trenches W. of Wancourt. I sent Laye and Able White back to Arras for a rest. I went out on a big working party, digging a new communication trench up a badly shelled valley. The night was quiet however and not many shells came over. Returned back at 3 a. m.

May 7th. Beautiful weather. Spent a quiet day reading and improving our shelters in the trenches.

May 8th. A very wet unpleasant day. Everything turned to mud. Enlarged our trench quarters in the afternoon as they were very cramped. Heavy fire at 2 a. m. to the N. of us. A German attack on Fresnoy which was apparently successful.

May 9th. A very fine day again. Everything turning green rapidly wherever possible – but in this chaos of shell holes there is not much chance for many things to grow. More shells than usual came over both by day and night, but no damage done.

May 10th. A hot summers day. Carried on with ordinary parades during the morning. Some shelling in the afternoon which killed three men and wounded two others. A very heavy bombardment about dinner time near Guemappe. De Calry was killed near here in the evening. He will be a great loss to the Brigade. After dinner I went round to the 7th R.B. to condole with them and was shelled on the way back. Our latrine was destroyed during the night.

May 11th. A very hot summers day. Spent a quiet morning doing mostly Office work. Had a hot walk in the afternoon to Neuville Vitasse to go to De Calry's funeral. Had to send out a large working party during the night. I was much afraid of trouble as the Division on our left attacked and took Cavalry farm and some trenches at 8-30 p. m. Much shooting by

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both sides which lasted till late at night. Some unlucky shells hit one of our parties just as they were starting off not 40 yards from Bt H.Q. and killed four and wounded nine. The remainder of the Company had a very poor time later on and we had altogether 25 casualties during the night.

May 12th. Got up at 3 a.m. and went round the line that we are to take over on the 14th. It is a good long walk from here and our guide lost his way. The neighbourhood of Battalion H.Q. seems very unhealthy and the front line to be the quietest place. No wire or anything in front to prevent the Germans from walking over at any time.

May 13th. Another very hot day – showers in the evening failed to cool the air much. A certain amount of shelling all round us. Several landed very near but no damage was done.

May 14th. A heavy thunderstorm during the night and the trenches became full of mud and water. Three direct hits on our trench during the afternoon, one within 8 yards of our Headquarters and not 2 yards from the telephone. The operator was untouched but all the wires were broken. Another fell on C.Coys Officers Mess, luckily just after they had finished dinner and all five Officers were outside. They were all knocked down and a servant inside who was clearing up was killed. After dark we moved up into the front line to relieve the 6th KOYLI. It was quite a long way and a very dark night. Several of the platoon guides lost their way and the relief was not completed till 3 a. m.

May 15th. Went round the trenches at 4 a.m. The smell horrible in places. Many bodies lying out in front and also buried in the parapet. Not much shelling but many vane bombs came over during the morning. In the evening the Boche put up a barrage on our front line and also behind, but nothing more came of it, though all night at intervals there was much shelling. Am feeling very stiff and rheumatic from living in these deep dug outs. Very dark nights.

May 16th. Went round the line at 6 a. m. There was much shelling and many bombs came over. It was not very pleasant and I had to go fast. Returned another way and passed several deserted trenches filled with

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dead Germans in a horrible state of decomposition. Weather misty, changing into rain which made the going very bad and slippery. Sent out two officers patrols one of which failed to return so I fear they must have been killed or captured.

May 17th. A very wet and dark night. It was hard work going around the line as the mud was very bad. The front line was however quieter.

May 18th. In the evening we captured two men and killed another. They were carrying two machine guns into a shell hole in front of their line. From the prisoners we got some very useful information with regard to all their machine guns and trench mortars, so that the following day we were able to put most of them out of action. The day was quiet but our guns were active. The weather and wind was unfavourable for the gas projectors and "Laycock" did not come off.

May 19th. Another prisoner of 8th Regt captured. He was seen in No Man's land and chased and caught by some of our men. An NCO who had been lost on patrol the night before came in after spending all the day in a shell hole in front of the German line. He brought very useful information. The day was quiet, but the communication trenches were still very muddy. An attack by the VI th Corps took place on our left at 9 p.m. Our relief by the 8th Bt was not finished till 2.30 a.m. No casualties, though there was a certain amount of shelling.

May 20th. Very little sleep during the night as the 33rd Division on our right made an attack at 5.15 a. m. Our artillery co-operated but as it was very foggy we could see nothing. The attack yesterday evening was a failure and this one only partly successful. The day was very hot and I enjoyed basking in the sun outside the dug out. St. Aubyn came back with some lilac this evening. It shows that Spring has come. Towards nightfall it started to rain. I hear that Rennie is on his way out to the Battalion. No one ever thought that he would come back and after commanding it for six months, it is very bad luck to give it up again.

May 21st. Quiet days spent in support. Big working parties at night

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but nothing in the day time. There has been very heavy rain and the trenches are in an awful state of mud.

May 24th. A certain amount of shelling but very few casualties. We have a grand view over the country from our Headquarters. Certain places the Boche shells regularly and some batteries in the Coseul Valley have had a very poor time. One night the Boche sent over a number of gas shells. We also have gas appliances, but the wind has proved unfavourable, though we have had several alarms that it was going off. To-night the Boche has been shelling very heavily to the N. of the Coseul and I expect an attack there. We are to be relieved by the Ox and Bucks at midnight.

May 25th. We did not get away till 4 a. m. as the telephone lines were broken and we could get no news of C Coys relief. All Companies eventually got clear without a casualty, and we walked back in the early morning to our old H. Q. on April 10th. The day was very hot and the batteries near us had a poor time of it, being shelled nearly all day with 8". I saw several direct hits and pieces of shell were flying about everywhere. The 10th Durhams relieved us in the evening and we moved back to

Beauraine. While having dinner we were bombed by aeroplanes but no damage was done. After dinner the General came in and told me that instead of having a rest, I was to go and take over command of the 9th Battalion the following day as Henry Porter had been wounded. George Rennie had just come back so he took over the 7th Bt again after being away over six months.

May 26th. A very hot day and it was most pleasant to have a bath. Am very sorry to leave this Battalion where we have a very nice lot of Officers. Our Band played in the afternoon. I had only just started it and this was the first time it had played in public. They were quite good. After tea I rode up as far as Wancourt and then walked up to Battalion H. Q. We are now in the left sector which is not nearly as pleasant as the right sector. We have a deep dug out but there are so many in it that it is not very comfortable. We had a very quiet evening.

May 27th. Whitsunday. I was woken up at 2.30 a. m. by a heavy

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bombardment and on going upstairs found that it was on our front. All the telephone lines to Companies were broken and I could not get through to them. However the wireless set was working and our left Company said they were all right. After half an hour the bombardment quieted down, when some one said that the Boche had broken through. I could not see anything and did not believe it. An orderly of ours was however shot standing at the top of our dug out, another was missing and several dug outs close by were bombed. We collected everyone we could and started scouring the country. A Coy collected one officer and six men, all Prussians of the 31st Regt. The officer was badly wounded. I soon after went round the line which was fairly quiet. We had very few casualties considering the heaviness of the bombardment. The communication trenches were completely blown in but the front line was not much damaged. A quiet afternoon but suddenly about 11.30 p. m. another barrage was put up on our right. This did not last for long but it caught several working parties and caused many casualties. The Boche at the same time attempted a raid against the Battalion on our right but he never reached the trenches.

May 28th. A quiet day with very little shelling. Visited the right Company in the line in the morning. Kestrel Lane at one place was very unhealthy, shells falling on either side. There was much blood everywhere from the working party which were badly caught in it last night. The afternoon and evening were quite quiet.

May 29th. A few minutes after I had finished shaving outside two shells landed close to the entrance of our dug out killing two men and wounding another. One poor fellow was completely blown to pieces part of him landing 90 yards away at the mouth of the Sergt Major's dug out. The weather continues fine and the trenches are nice and dry. We were relieved during the night by the 9th R.B. but did not get to our new H.Q. till 3 a.m. It was a quiet relief, no casualties.

May 30th. We have a shelter in a small dug out under the bank in Albatross in which to live. A May tree which is in full bloom

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has been trained to grow right into our house. The weather is warm and sunny, and as long as we are not much shelled it is very pleasant. Saw all the Companies during the afternoon. Towards

evening a very heavy thunderstorm came on which flooded us all out and made the trenches horrible again.

May 31st. A fine day after the storm. C Coy were very unlucky in the morning getting five officers wounded by a shell. Two however were very slightly hit and could carry on. Otherwise the day was uneventful.

June 1st. Beautiful weather. The trenches are drying up nicely. Had a quiet day with very little shelling except at night when they put some over very close to our house.

June 2nd. A hot morning. Discovered some excellent asparagus beds in Wancourt, so sent over to collect some as well as gooseberries for making tarts and rhubarb. Lacy came back laden with irises, paconees snowballs, weigalias, and day lilies.

June 3rd. Another glorious day. The Boche spent from 10 a. m. till 4 p. m. in firing at three batteries about 500 yards away from us on the other side of the valley. He was putting 8 inch shells into them and before lunch his shooting was extraordinarily good, he got four direct hits on the guns but no one was hurt. As he devoted his time to counter batterywork, we in the trenches has a quiet day. In the evening I walked into Wancourt and looked through all the gardens where there were many nice flowers and shrubs. At midnight our relief by the 6th Somersets began and we got back to trenches near Neuville Vitasse by 3 a. m.

June 4th. A hot cloudless day. What a blessing this weather is. We spent the day in support: very quiet and peaceful. I went inside a derelict tank and inspected it carefully. It looked most uncomfortable. In the evening we were relieved by the 7th Bt. We moved back to a camp near Beaurains. Scarcely had we got there before bombs began to drop on other camps around us and we had to put all our lights out. There was nothing near our camp.

June 5th. A very hot and lazy day. The men were all employed in bathing and inspections. In the evening the Oxfords band played and

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we had a very good concert.

June 6th. Still very hot. Ordinary parades. In the afternoon went to see a demonstration of Tanks. Sixteen did a sham attack on our old trenches in the F. Sector. It was quite interesting and there were crowds of spectators, mostly staff, who were evidently anxious to say that they had seen a tank. They were remarkably silent and could barely be heard a hundred yards away. Some also could go 7 to 8 miles per hour on favourable ground and their powers of rapid turning were very good. Just back to camp in time to avoid a dust storm and thunderstorm. The 7th Bt Band then played to us very nicely.

June 7th. An early rise. Spent the morning field firing. Weather very hot. The Brigadier & Div General were both watching. On arrival back in Camp found the Corps Commander making a tour of camps. Heavy thunderstorm in afternoon: then succeeded in collecting some very nice flowers in Beaurain. The Brigadier dined with us in the evening and came on to our concert. Hear that I am to go on leave to-morrow morning early.

June 8th. Left Beaurains at 7 a.m. in a car with Bruce and arrived at Boulogne at 10 a.m. and reached London 3 p.m. Pretty quite quick going.

July 6th. There is here a hiatus in my diary as I have been too lazy to write lately and there has been very little of interest to record. I returned from leave to England on June 19th getting back here in 7 ½ hours from London, which is very quick travelling. A car met us at Boulogne and took us direct back to our destination. Since then we have been resting in the village of Puchevillers, about 12 miles from Amiens. The whole time we have been very busy training, field firing etc and occupied with all sorts of Brigade Competitions in which we have done very well. The Concert Party performs every other night and what with a Cinema and other attractions in the village, the men have had plenty of amusements in the evening. The weather on the whole has been good and has interfered very little with the training. Drafts of very poor

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quality however have completed us up to strength. On the 5th we had to send away a guard of honour to Bavincourt for the King. We were specially selected out of the Division as being the smartest Battalion which is a great honour.

July 12th. On the 10th we received our orders to move North and on the 12th we marched to Candas 9 ½ miles where we entrained. It was a very hot morning and the men were rather exhausted as they were carrying heavy packs. The train journey was quite quick and we actually left Candas at the appointed time. The men were packed 40 or more in cattle trucks and after a seven hours train journey we detrained at Bailleul where we had another march of three miles to our camp on the far side of the Town. We are all crowded together in a small field, but for H. Q. we have room in the farm house.

July 13th. We were woken up during the night by bombs being dropped on the Station. Luckily none came near our camp. Soon afterwards a long range gun shelled Bailleul. In the afternoon Lacey and I went for a very nice ride and climbed up to the top of Kemmel Hill where we had a very fine view over Messines and the German lines beyond.

July 14th. A rather noisy night and many bombs were dropped around. The Archies were very busy and a dynamo that works a searchlight just outside my window made sleep impossible. We started off for a route march at 7 a. m. and soon afterwards a shell from an 8 inch naval gun landed not 100 yards from us. Several more came over and it seemed to be going very close to our camp. On the route march we had a heavy thunderstorm and on returning to camp found that shells had landed on either side of our transport doing no damage and another had fallen close to our farmhouse, and a large piece had come in through the window and broke our only china tea pot.

July 15th. Very heavy rain during the night, so that there was no disturbance by aeroplanes. Rode over and had lunch and tea with

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the 7th Bt and after tea rode on through Kemmel to the Wytchaete ridge whence we had a grand view over the Boche lines and to the towns behind them. We had not been there long when several shells came very close, as we had evidently been seen. The desolation and ruin all around was dreadful. It was almost impossible to find the site of the village – not one stone remains upon another. Chestermaster who commands our 13th Bt came to dinner and then we had an open air Concert afterwards.

July 16th. Another quiet night. Went for a ride in the afternoon and saw a Boche plane attack four of our Kite balloons. The crew dropped out in parachutes at once but the balloons were not brought down.

July 21st. No great excitement during the last five days. We are still at the same place. One day I lunched with Rennie, Seymour and Chestermaster were there too, so that there were 4 C.O.'s of Rifle Battalions there together and we then and there drew up a programme of sports and football. These were held on our ground on the 21st and were most successful. Many came from the 18th & 21st Bts and the whole of the 7th, 8th and 13th Bts marched over. It was a unique occasion and everyone was very pleased at meeting so many old friends. One afternoon I rode up to the top of Kemmel Hill to view the bombardment which began two days ago. It was a magnificent sight as we could see right up to Ostend. Ypres seemed almost at ones feet and the chimneys of Lille appeared clear on the horizon.

July 23rd. We went to reconnoitre the line that we are soon to take over. We went by bus to Voormezele and then had a long and dusty walk across country to Brigade H.Q. which were in a tunnel. Just as we approached the Boche started shelling and we hurried inside. As he continued shelling we went up the tunnel for about 800 yards and then across country to Battalion H.Q. It was the most desolate and dreadful looking country that I have ever seen. Once it was covered with woods, now there are only grey tree stumps four or five feet high, not a leaf or a blade of grass anywhere, only miles of craters &

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shell holes in every direction. A Brigadier and his Brigade Major were both killed on the road we were on. We had luck and managed to avoid the shells and after a very long walk arrived back to find that the bus had gone. However in time we found some empty lorries and climbing on to them we came home very weary.

July 24th. Had an early start and practised an attack before the Brigadier. It was a very hot sultry morning.

July 25th. The Russian news is very bad and the papers are most depressing. Steady rain all the morning.

July 30th. Lunched at Corps H. Q. with Willan and then got a car and went on to Dunkirk to see the 2nd Bt. They had been made up to strength again and were in good form. We dined there and motored back after dinner.

July 31st. We have to stand by to move at a moments notice. The big attack has begun early this morning and the noise of the guns is unceasing. The weather is however very bad.

Aug 3rd. We are still here and have not moved. It has rained steadily since the 31st and the mud everywhere is awful making movement quite impossible. Providence is certainly on the side of the Boche. In the afternoon I had a very wet drive to Hazebrouck to try and buy canteen goods. I only succeeded in buying some wine. On the way back went to Cassel to see Charles Butler who is on 2nd Army H. Q. He told me much that was interesting and gave us our moves.

Aug 4th. Another very wet day. Gave a lecture to all Officers and N.C.O.'s in the morning and after lunch rode over to see 7th Bt who were all very flourishing. Stopped there during a very heavy

thunderstorm and then rode back over by roads that were only torrents. Wood was suddenly taken ill with appendicitis this afternoon and has had to go to Hospital to be operated on at once.

Aug 5th. A fairly fine day but the ground did not dry up much. Many men are I believe being drowned in the trenches and others are so stuck that they are unable to be brought out. Several wounded are I am afraid like that and have been stuck in the mud for 48 hours. We

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had a C.O.'s conference in the afternoon and are due to move the following day.

Aug 6th. Started off at 8 a. m. It was luckily a cool and cloudy morning and it was not till the end of our 10 ½ mile march that it got hot. No one fell out till the last few hundred yards. Our billets are very scattered in farm houses all over the country and it would take a couple of hours to walk all round them. We had a fight with the Shropshires over one good billet, but Lacey's persuasive argument prevailed with the Brigade and though it was really theirs we got it.

Aug 7th. A quiet day. Practised with Yukon packs in the morning, very useful. A good outdoor Concert in the evening.

Aug 9th. We are still in the same place. G.H.Q. are evidently anxious not to put us into the line but to keep us for a big attack as we are fresh troops and have had a good rest. During the night the Railway yards were bombed, some of them fell quite close to us and broke some windows, but very little damage was done. Hazebrouck was bombed at the same time and shelled by a 17 inch Naval gun – a colossal thing. Each shot demolishes three or four houses. It was a sad sight to see all the women and children fleeing from the town in every direction some with only a few clothes on and looking terrified. I was disgusted to see men from the Army Ordnance Corps flying too along the roads. They are all embusques and I hope will get often shelled. The men told them what they thought of them and so did the Brigadier. I was quite ashamed of them.

Aug 15th. The weather continues very bad constant heavy thunderstorms and the condition of the country side is very wet. We remained at our last billets till this morning. The last night was very sleepless as most extraordinary orders kept coming in all through the night. However we got off in time at 7.20 a. m. and marched to Borre where the whole Brigade embussed. We were a fine convoy of 177 busses, which brought us quickly up to Poperinge where we got out in very heavy rain and then marched some 6 kils to our new camps near Outerdon. It being my birthday we had an extra good dinner

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only disturbed by one shell which dropped 100 yards away.

Aug 16th. A noisy night as there was a heavy bombardment and we were due to attack early this morning. The attack seems to have been mostly a failure. We had a Concert in the evening and while this was going on an Orderly came to say that we must be ready to move at a moment's notice.

Aug 17th. We had a comfortable move as we did not start till 9 a.m. and then marched to Dickebusch where we stopped for dinner. We left again at 5 p.m. and went by half platoons to trenches E of Zillebeke. We got on very well till near Zillebeke when the Boche started shelling the road. We went into shell holes close by and waited. Some shells came close by and mixed with the

H.E. were gas shells, both lachrymatory and chlorine. We got some strong whiffs of the latter which burnt the throat and made one feel very sick. After much delay the remainder of the column came on but the guides for us had disappeared after the shelling. Meanwhile some mustard oil shells came over and we all had to put on our respirators. Eventually the men were all put in trenches but were terribly crowded. We found out our dug out which was deep, very wet and very overcrowded. However we were quite safe though uncomfortable and shared the dug out with the Shropshires and a Bde H.Q.

Aug 18th. A beautiful morning. I was up at 4 a.m. and went up to the front line to have a general look round with Stucks/Sterks. It was very interesting seeing all the ground that I had been over in 1914 but now it was absolutely unrecognizable. The country was ghastly, not a leaf or a blade of grass anywhere only shell holes full of water. Horrible smells and sights. The morning hour was quite quiet but the Boche started shelling as soon as we got to Bt H.Q. & he shelled us steadily all day with 5.9's & 8". Very noisy and most unpleasant.

Aug 19th. The weather is luckily fine and sunny, so that the country is drying up well. The heavy shelling all day and night caused us

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some thirty three casualties of which ten were killed. Our dug out is a wonderful place very wet and very deep. Two pumps are kept going all day and night to keep the water down and the atmosphere is appalling. We had not so much shelling during the day and only fifteen casualties but many narrow escapes. Numerous ammunition dumps of ours were blown up during the day. from 5 a.m. -7 a.m. we had a two hour bombardment of the German line, all the guns on the Army front firing, it was a fine sight. During the night many German aeroplanes came over and bombed the camps behind.

Aug 20th. A very disturbed night, as we were alarmed four times by gas and had to put our respirators on. It was quite like being on a ship, the pumps working with the swish of water, the distant shelling sounding like the propeller and the nearer shells like heavy seas breaking on board. Men were coughing and sneezing and being sick all round. The only thing missing was the motion. I went up to our new Bt H.Q. at 5 a. m. and had a quiet journey, though the smell of gas was very bad all the way and most people were wearing respirators.

Aug 21st. During the night we relieved the 9 R.B. who were in the line in front of Westhoek. We had a disturbed night in our dug out owing to the whole of the Ox & Bucks coming in and losing their way. We left at 3-30 a. m. with all our Headquarters and had not gone half a mile before we ran into a barrage so we changed direction and ran into another. Eventually by halting frequently and many detours we managed to avoid the barrages and reach our new H. Q. under the Menin Rd. Finding that the relief was not complete, I went off to Westhoek to see Company Commanders to enquire how they were getting on. Awful journey then over swamp covered with shell holes full of water. The smells were horrible, dead horses and Boche everywhere and the most awful scene of desolation. There is not a blade of grass or a leaf within a mile. Not even on the Somme was the country laid to waste as in this place. The day passed fairly quietly without much shelling but soon after dark we had a very rough time and many shells landed on the roof of our

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dug out, putting out the candles each time and covering is with earth and dust. There was very little sleep for us as this lasted all night and we were constantly disturbed by messages.

Aug 22nd. Zero hour was at 7 a.m. and I watched the Shropshires and the 43rd Brigade go over the top. Punctual to the second the barrage started. A great concentration of guns which made a terrific noise. At 4.45 a.m. there had been another show to the North which had caused a certain amount of retaliation on our front. Four tanks also took part. They very nearly went over the top of our dug out and crushed us in. It was a grand sight to see everyone starting and climbing out of the trenches at the appointed minute behind the barrage. Our Brigade on the left very soon gained its objective but the Brigade on the right were hung up about half way and could not get on. They had a fairly peaceful time in the front line except for machine gun fire. We got all the retaliation and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. we had a barrage of shells of all calibres over the top of our dug out. I have seldom spent a more unpleasant day anywhere. The water creeping up underneath and we not daring to show our noses above ground. One of the entrances was blown in and we were constantly smothered in dust. As soon as it was dusk we were subjected to the heaviest of shell fire, another entrance was blown in and the dug out set on fire. We put the fire out but one man was badly burned by the phosphorus and the sentry was blown to pieces poor devil. All our means of signalling have been destroyed three lamps have been smashed, the wireless apparatus the power buzzer and the telephone are all broken by shell fire. We however manage to exist and try and be cheerful. I am afraid we have had many casualties. Our reserve Company had 9 killed and 13 wounded & the escapes were miraculous. What an existence this is. It is only the politician and staff that wish to prolong the war.

Aug 23rd. We had a very noisy night with shelling all the time. The morning however was rather quieter and there was much less shelling during the day. In the afternoon I went up to see the Companies who

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were in good spirits and did not seem to be having too bad a time. The smells there were awful – dead corpses and mules everywhere, I was almost sick. I nearly got bogged when crossing the marsh as I had to make a detour owing to shelling.

Aug 24th. A fairly quiet night but soon after 3 a.m. our guns started firing and the Boche very soon opened barrage fire. Our dug out under the Menin Road unfortunately lies in the line of their barrage fire and from 4 a.m. to 6 p.m. we had hell. The Boche counter attacked with a new division and regained some of the ground he had lost the day before. There was great confusion all the morning as the situation was very obscure. I sent a pigeon message back to Division as all other methods of communication were broken, power buzzer, lamp, telephone, wireless all were smashed. The whole day we sat under a hurricane of shells expecting every moment that the dug out would be blown in. One entrance was blown in and much of the roof exposed and the whole landscape by evening had altered in appearance. The trenches near by had been flattened out and all along the road were dead – some blown to pieces with fragments of arms lying here and there, others that had been disinterred and formed evil smells all down the road. It was a vile spot. Our cook in spite of all difficulties managed to cook us excellent meals on the Primus Stove though at times rather covered with sand and dust from the shells bursting overhead. By evening we were all of us quite deaf. During the night we were relieved by the 23rd London Regt. Luckily it had quietened down very much and we had only eight casualties going out. During the four days in the line we had two officers killed, two wounded and 150 O.R. killed and wounded.

Aug 25th. Early this morning we moved back to the Halfway House to our wet dug out. Everything was very quiet and peaceful and no shells fell near us as we came out. We have been very lucky in the weather, beautiful weather every day that we have been in the line. In the evening we were relieved by the 8th KOYLI and we then

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marched back to the Café Belge. The relief was not complete till 8.30 p.m. and I was very nearly caught by some shrapnel just before we left. We had one or two narrow escapes on the way down as they were shelling the road, but we did not linger. On arrival at camp we were bombed by aeroplanes, but no damage was done though our champagne supper was rather interrupted, which we had arranged for the night we came out of the trenches. We have been the luckiest Battalion in the Division in the way of casualties 4 officers and 150 men only – some of the other battalions have been practically wiped out.

Aug 26th. We embussed at 9 a.m. and came through Poperinge to near Abele where we went into Camp. Not a bad place.

Aug 27th. A day of rest in Camp. It poured with rain and the ground is again thoroughly sodden. At night a violent gale arose with the rain which nearly blew our tents down.

Aug 28th. A terrific gale blowing and occasional rain showers most the hop fields have been laid flat. In the afternoon I went for a ride and had tea with Brigade. I hear that we are to move to-morrow

Aug 29th. A showery day but the march was only a short one of about 5 miles. We passed through some quite pretty country near the Mont des Cats and billeted in Thieushook. Most of the men are in tents but some are in barns and we have got a very nice mess where the people are most friendly.

Aug 30th. Ordinary parades in the morning. After lunch I rode up to Cassel to see Charles Butler who was not in but I had tea with B.C. there. In the evening the Brigadier came to dine and we then had a Concert in one of the barns – it was a very successful one

Aug 31st. A showery morning rather interrupted parades. Charles Butler came to lunch, and in the afternoon I rode over to see the 7th Bt who were near Meteren and I had tea with them. A football Match took place between us and the 43rd Field Ambulances in which we were victorious and then we had the Oxford's Band to play in Camp, followed by another Concert. I dined at Brigade H.Q. Our new Brigadier

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is extremely nice and hospitable.

Sept 1st. We are on the move once more towards the line. A march of between 9 and 10 miles through Bailleul brought us to Neuve Eglise where we went to a Camp. It was a vile day cold and drizzling. In the evening we had to send on parties up to the trenches to reconnoitre.

Sept 2nd. We were aroused during the night by bombs being dropped somewhere near, but no damage was done. We had an early start in the morning and went up to Messines where we took over the Support trenches. The weather was very showery. There was not much shelling during the day and in the evening we were relieved by the Shropshires and we took over the front lines

trenches. It was luckily a moon light night and so we found our way up easily. There was not much shelling but there was a lot of machine gun fire. The C.T. was very shallow and very little protection to us.

Sept 3rd. At dawn I went to two of the Coy H. Q. which were also in the pill boxes of concrete. On coming away from them, I was sniped with whiz bangs which luckily missed me. The day was quiet but as there was no covered approaches to the front line we could not visit them. Our own dug out is a pill box of concrete, very strong, very small and very low, so that it is impossible to stand up in it. We are terribly crowded but must make the best of it. After dark, I made a tour of the whole line which took me three hours. Except for a little machine gun fire, it was very quiet and while I was away H. Q. came in for most of the shelling. In parts the front line was only a series of shell holes – very wet.

Sept 4th. A glorious day. A certain amount of shelling in the morning otherwise it was quite quiet. A Hun aeroplane patrolled very low over our lines for nearly four hours. At night I walked round the front line between midnight and 3 a. m. It was a beautiful moonlight night and going was very easy. By night there is very little firing except Machine gun in the front line.

Sept 5th. A lovely day and a very quiet morning. We lunched outside in the trench on the strength of it. In the afternoon no

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no less than three Generals came up to Battalion H.Q. a sure sign that it is a quiet sector. Shortly after their departure, the Boche having seen the unusual movement, started shelling us. After dark we had a great number of visitors of all kinds and a very busy evening till midnight when I started to go round the front line.

Sept 6th. A heavy thunderstorm early in the morning wetted all the trenches again. There was much shelling by both sides to the N & S of us, the Boche raiding our lines to the South and we to the North. A certain amount of shelling of our trenches later during the day. In the evening the Shropshires came up to relieve us. I am not sorry to leave our dug out, which though safe was extraordinarily uncomfortable, as it was impossible to stand up in it and signallers etc were all crowded in too. We were also devoured by the most hungry mosquitoes which left one little peace all night. Our casualties for the 4 days were 1 officer wounded & 6 O.R's. We had a quiet relief getting back into support by 2 a. m.

Sept 7th. We had a good night's sleep, though mosquitoes are troublesome here too, breeding in the water in the shell holes and the rank weeds that have sprung up everywhere. I explored the ruins of Messines & found sundry unburied corpses and many young turnips, some of the latter I brought back for lunch as well as a few flowers. The day was very hot and muggy, and most of the day I spent reading on top of the dug out.

Sept 8th. A very foggy morning so that we can move about without fear of being seen. Our dug out here is very palatial compared with the last one and the walls are nicely papered. There are also two rooms and a certain amount of furniture in it. Very little shelling all day owing to the mist. In the afternoon the Corps Commander came round and wandered round our trenches. He is especially keen on sanitation.

Sept 9th. A fine day but rather more shelling. Morice St Aubyn came up in the afternoon as they are relieving us the following day. Had a very nice bath in the open. The mosquitoes at night are very

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bad, swarms surround our dug out. The night was quiet: apparently the gas that was sent over the night before both to the N & S of us proved a good sedative. There are excellent turnip fields around here evidently planted by the Boche and we collect large numbers every evening which go into the dinners the following day.

Sept 10th. A very quiet night and a foggy morning. The 8th R. B. came up by 9 A. M. and relieved 3 of our Companies in daylight, the fourth having to wait till night before the 7th K. R. R. came up to take over. We marched back to our old camp near Neuve Eglise. Had tea with George Rennie. Their Band played very nicely outside.

Sept 11th. A rather disturbed night as aeroplanes were over all night dropping bombs all round the district. The Doctor too next door snored so loudly that between him and the bombs sleep was difficult. It turned into a very hot day and we had the 7th Bt Band playing in Camp in the afternoon and a Concert in the evening.

Sept 12th. Working parties and training filled up the days work and in the evening a Concert. Pickering and the Goose came to dinner with Fairlie & Irving.

Sept 13th. A cold and raw day. We are finding many working parties. The 7th Bt Band played to us followed by a Concert in the evening. Everything sounds very quiet up in the front line. From our camp we overlook Armentieres and the German lines beyond.

Sept 14th. Nothing of interest to chronicle. In the afternoon I rode over to see a new camp that we are to take over on the 18th. The Boche was firing at a Kite Balloon over our head with a naval gun and clockwork fuze. Great pieces of shell landed all around.

Sept 15th. On the move once more. Started at 8.20 a.m. to march to the Doulien area behind Bailleul. It was a hot and dusty march and we found our billets terribly scattered. It took me over two hours to ride around them. They were very comfortable however and the people round here are extraordinarily kind, going out of their way to help us.

Sept 16th. Sunday and a quiet day. Went for a ride through Steenwork

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in the afternoon. The Boche were shelling a kite balloon overhead and the owner dropped down in a parachute. This is almost a daily occurrence here and the Boche goes on firing with a 9-2 naval shell until the owner comes out.

Sept 17th. We got a car this morning and went to Armentieres in it to reconnoitre the defences to the North of the town. Very nice country, with rivers, canals, boats, diving boards and all the requirements for a hot summer. We came back all through the town which was absolutely deserted, not a civilian, not a soldier to be seen in it. We walked through miles of deserted and ruined streets without meeting a soul. The gunners have been shelling it heavily of late and sending over gas shells every night. It is far more ruined than Arras. We then had a pleasant drive from Armentieres through

Estaires where there are some good shops. In the afternoon we had a C.O's Conference at Brigade H.Q.

Sept 18th. We are on the move once more and are loathe to leave our comfortable billets. The march however was not a long one though the weather was showery. We went to a camp near Neuve Eglise where we are all in huts.

Sept 19th. A fine cold morning. Had a very pleasant ride going round the Companies who were in the training area. The Boche after lunch was busy shelling some balloons overhead and many pieces landed close to us. There was also some exciting air fights. In the evening Pickering and I went in a very luxurious car to dine with the Corps Commander General Hunter Weston who was most agreeable and who gave us a most excellent dinner. There was a long and very dark drive back after dinner without head lights and several times we were nearly in the ditch. It poured with rain all the way, but the whole sky to the North was brilliantly lighted up by the continuous flash of guns. It was a very heavy bombardment that was going on but there was not a sound as the wind was in the wrong direction.

Sept 20th. The usual training all the morning. The big attack took

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place this morning and the first accounts seem quite good. It was done on a large scale now that Gough has no longer charge of operations and so was successful. Gough frittered away eleven divisions, practically without gaining any success, while with a big attack on one day a large extent of important ground has been secured. The usual training was carried out morning and afternoon.

Sept 21st. It seems to have set in for a spell of fine weather. Heavy mists in the early morning, but after they clear off, bright sunshine follows. In the evening some Boche aeroplanes came overhead. All the guns fired at them and fragments of shells came down all over the camp. One nose cap came through the roof of the Mess, and went through a case of whiskey which had been used as a seat, smashing 2 bottles of whiskey to powder.

Sept 22nd. Nearly all the Battalion is out on working parties so that there is very little for me to do. During a football Match in the afternoon Boche aeroplane came over and heavily fired at. A "dud Archie" landed in the field close to the goal. It luckily did not explode, and on the ball going behind, the goal kicked off from the hole where it fell. We had a good Concert in the evening.

Sept 23rd. Sunday. We had Church Parade in the Camp in the morning, which was rather disturbed by German aeroplanes flying overhead and more attention was paid to them than to the sermon. We played the 7th Bt at football in the afternoon and beat them. In the evening we had another Concert. The Shropshires were very unlucky to-day, a "dud Archie" shell landed on their signallers' hut and exploded inside killing and wounding fourteen signallers.

Sept 24th. Have been given leave to England. A car arrived at 10 a.m. and we motored to Boulogne arriving there at 1 p.m. just in time to catch the boat. My warrant was dated the 25th, so I was very lucky to get across. We had a beautiful crossing, but the ship was very crowded.

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There was an air raid on London that night but I was at the Theatre and heard nothing at all, though some bombs must have dropped fairly close.

Sept 25th. Went to inspect the damage done to by the bombs it was not much – mostly broken windows in Devonshire House and neighbourhood. Just as I was wanting to go to Euston to catch the 8-45 p.m. Irish Mail there was another air raid and I had some difficulty in getting to the Station where everything was in darkness. The only two nights I have spent in London, there have been air raids.

Home of his cousin obviously returned to Ireland