

WWI Primary Source

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Clerk, Karaka Bay, Wellington, NZ

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Service Number: 24/63

2nd New Zealand Rifle Brigade

Served: Egypt, Western Front

Returned to NZ

Died in Wellington 1966



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prohibiting. One of the guards was an interesting character, he seeming to be well educated and full of information. We had a good view of the canal most of the time. A good deal of shipping was passing through - also men-of-war. The irrigation canal running along one side of the railway line has made a great difference in the fertility of the land. The contrast between the two sides was very great. We finally detrained at Helmich Station at 9 p.m. and marched to the camp (2 miles) with the band in the lead. The Australians and others in camp lined up on each side and gave us a good hearing. As usual, no tent had been allotted to the signallers so we took possession of an empty one in C Company's lines which luckily was not to be used. The sand floor proved very comfortable but was rather a nuisance. Hot weather during the day and cold at night is not going to be very healthy.

Friday 19th November

The camp looked very imposing by day, there being such a great number of tents and horse lines (about 30,000 men in all the camps and 70,000 horses). As there were no orders we took french leave and walked into Heliopolis (half a mile). It is an interesting town and holds a horde of interesting natives. The buildings and streets are fine except in a few of the side streets. The catholic mosque is a great sight. The YMCA have a reading and writing room which is very useful. Electric cars run into Cairo (6 miles) and decent cars they are (fare $\frac{1}{2}$ piastre). Trains also run into Cairo but it is a longer walk to the station. During the afternoon we took a trip into Cairo by train under the guidance of a friend of Bill Callick's who had been in camp for some time and knew all about things. The whole of the signallers (bat) trooped across to the Canterbury Mounted lines where we picked up our guide. The journey in from Helmich station was interesting. The old Khedive's place was pointed out to us and also the native quarter - "Dead City". Arriving at Cairo, the first thing our guide had us do was to have our boots cleaned for $\frac{1}{2}$ piastre each. We then wandered about the streets and had a good look around. They Egyptian Cafe was visited first where we had some cool refreshments. One quarter of the city is very fine. Shepherd's Hotel, the Continental and the shops and park adjoining are well known. Wherever we went the dagos continually bothered us to buy things, and the only thing which seemed to have any dispersing effect on them were the words "Imsheh Allah" which worked the oracle every time. Most of the women are very pretty of features but a good many wear the head dress which almost covers their face and is worn as dictated by their religion. While passing the police station three of us were a little in rear of the rest. There was some disturbance among the natives in the square facing the station and while watching two or three of them being run in we were separated from the others. We took the direction we thought they had taken and had an hour's fruitless search. As we were not game to venture into the back street alone we had to find our way back to the station. We missed seeing a good deal of interest by this misadventure. While getting back to the station we heard rumours that we were breaking camp an unknown destination that afternoon but we did not believe it until we met two sergeants. We had a fairly good tea at one of the cafes and then took the train back to camp. Arriving in camp we found everyone bustling about packing up as we expected to move anytime. We managed to get in some sleep however.

Saturday 20th November

The first thing we heard on waking in the new camp was the native paper seller's dirge - "Gyptian mile - half a disaster" meaning "Egyptian Mail - $\frac{1}{2}$ piastro". We expected to leave all day but were disappointed again.

Norm Ingpen and myself took a trip into Heliopolis in the evening. Looking around the town we discovered some fine cafes - "Les Pyramides" especially was good. The Y.M.C.A. we found a good place for writing or a wash. The better residential quarter is very fine and the residents are above the average in education and cleanliness. The better class of Egyptian in his trim English suit and fez is a picture.

and came to light with buckets and what not. They were evidently not used to that sort of thing, but soon fell into line. The camp was in a merry mood for some time after this. Every home regiment seemed to be represented in camp - City of London, Royal Scottish, Middlesex, Devons and many others besides Australians, a few Ghurkas and ourselves. Just opposite the camp are two large buildings utilised for housing refugees. We managed to get leave from 3.30 p.m. and Norm Ingpen and myself commandeered a couple of our bikes and hiked up into town. We visited the waterfront first. Had a decent swim in the harbour in the morning. There were at least a dozen transports in port ready for sailing. One transport, the "Mercian", not long in from the old country, was peppered by an enemy submarine four days out from Gibraltar and had an exciting time of it. She had a shot hole in her funnel and a good deal of her woodwork splintered. I should say the waterfront and wharfing extended over 6 miles at least. After looking round the wharfs, were found our way into the better quarter of the city and had a good look around. There are some magnificent buildings in the main streets and the streets themselves are well laid out. We noticed particularly the following places of interest:- Consula Square and its numerous cafes, Cherif Pasha and Post Office Sts, The French Garden, The Mahmoudich Canal with its picturesque dhows. We took some refreshment at a French cafe in Consula Square and were much amused at the method the waiter used to clear the dagos away from the tables. He took a soda water syphon and played it on the crowd, much to their disgust and ours. The city was full of military depots, ordnance stores etc. We were able to make the Frenchmen and women understand a few sentences in their lingo, and could also understand a little of what they said. I wished I could pronounce correctly. The inhabitants on the whole are a cosmopolitan crew, nearly every nation being represented. We found Alexandria a much more interesting city than Cairo. Rather tired after our ride we arrived back at camp about 9 p.m. We were fortunate enough to get a piece or two of bacon from the cookhouse and had a good supper therefrom.

Wednesday 24th November

We were up before reveille in the morning expecting to leave any minute. After drawing emergency rations we had orders to be ready for leaving any time. A Coy and one platoon of B Coy and a few details including six of we signallers were paraded and finally left for the station about 7.30 a.m. It was hard luck having to leave our pals behind but we were eager to be on the move somewhere. No one knew what our destination was until the Colonel spoke to us before leaving, telling us that we were going out towards Tripoli to guard the lines of communication to a force somewhere near the frontier. It turned out that the Bedouins had raided two or three small towns and the idea was that if they gained a victory over any small body of our troops there would be a big rising in the west. Information was of the vaguest however. Our bikes came in useful to carry us down to the station, saving us a hot march. Arriving there we had a little spare time and managed to get a postcard away home. After helping to load the wagons and enjoying a luscious lemon squash we steamed out of the station at 9.30 a.m. Much to our disgust a couple of goats were packed into our carriage with us. We pushed them into the carriage next to ours which was filled with natives but had to bring them back again. The bikes were used for penning them in the centre of the carriage and we made the best of things. We had met with many funny experiences during our short period of soldiering but this travelling with goats was something new. It was a fairly interesting journey west, especially the last stages. The beginning of the Libyan desert stretched as far as the eye could reach on either side and was unbroken except for an oasis here and there and a little vegetation at the stations. As we approached Dabaa, our destination, we passed an armoured train manned by Ghurkas. With its searchlight and machine guns it looked very sinister. At the station we noticed several armoured motors and also transport motors. We detrained and pitched camp about half a mile north west of the station of Dabaa. The village(?) of Dabaa consists of about half a dozen small buildings but some large barracks are situated $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile to the northward. The coast is about a mile north of the barracks. A few Sikhs and Egyptian Camel Corps men were encamped near the station. We were very tired after pitching the tents and turned in as soon as we could. The sand was not very agreeable but there was not much room for it, after fifteen of us had packed ourselves into one tent.

Thursday 25th November

El-Dabaa is a god-forsaken place and only fit for niggers to live in. Sand everywhere and in everything. We tapped the telegraph line running along the old railway bed with our new portable telephone and these instruments proved a great success. (The hill above the camp has been named Hill Childs after our Major). Our tucker consisted of bully beef and biscuits flavoured with a little jam and tea. A good many of the chaps have a touch of dysentery already. Goodness knows what a state our health will be in if we are kept here any length of time. It is impossible to keep anything free from dust; our bikes and instruments suffering in consequence. Things began to get interesting towards evening however as the enemy's advance guard was rumoured to be fairly close. About 12 motor car loads of refugees scorched passed us to the barracks just at nightfall. We were ordered to sleep with clothes on and loaded rifle handy and we fully expected a dust up during the night. We were disappointed however as our outposts did not give the alarm. Bedouins on foot or on camels passed continuously during the day. We wondered at them not being stopped and searched but found out the reason for us not doing so. It would cause a feeling of unrest and resentment among them if they were stopped.

Friday 26th November

A platoon of our chaps under Lieutenant Birkby went up to the Gamania wells in the morning - a distance of 7 miles over rotten country. Jack Hare went up as signaller with them. We practised with the phones again during the day. An alleged spy was caught near Alexandria yesterday and brought up to be court-martialled by the Colonel. I got a snap of him and his guard standing near the Colonel's tent. Sergeant MacDonald and Bill Callick biked it (or rather, attempted to bike it) to the wells in the afternoon and arrived back after dark fairly puffed, having had to push their bikes most of the way back. It is no joke pushing bikes through the desert. They should either supply us with motor bikes, helios or horses.

Saturday 27th November

Soon after breakfast we were detailed to go out on bikes to link up communication with the wells. We established two stations and then I was sent ahead to make the last link in the chain. We got our bearings for future references and then we made our way back to camp, two on bikes and one on foot. It was strenuous work as we had to go by compass, the sand being very thick most of the time. Half way back we got parted from Mackay who was on foot. Two of us, Bill Callick and myself, were detailed to go down the line with the boss to Mex. We had an interesting journey down inasmuch as we say some of our signalling cobbers at one of the stations. Sections of our battalion have been posted at the different stations along the line and they all seemed to be in better circumstances than ourselves. We arrived at Mex station at about 7.30 p.m. and I was left to look after the bikes while the boss and Bill Callick went to look for the camp. After waiting about an hour the boss rang up on the phone to say they had not found the camp (Lieutenant Christopher's) but would scout round in search of same. The station-master proved a very interesting character, speaking English fairly fluently. Bill and the boss arrived back at the station at 11 p.m. having had no luck. No one seemed to know the whereabouts of the particular camp we wanted so after trying the connections of our phone on the station phone we started to move on up the line. (Mex Junction 10 miles from Alexandria Station). After moving along the line a bit we came on to a causeway which looked an endless length. However we pegged away across it hoping to end up somewhere suitable for a sleep. We could not ride the bikes so had to push them. The causeway stretched across a salt lake and hundreds of wild duck rose as we passed. We passed two or three Arabs sitting alongside the line who were allegedly policemen but were most likely spys. Coming near the end of the causeway Bill spotted a sentry with rifle at the trail so we knew that it was one of our chaps. He turned out to be sentry over Lieutenant Christopher's camp which was a pleasant surprise for us. (The causeway must have been at least 3 miles long). The chaps on guard were very good to us and supplied us with a drink of hot tea. The boss turned up with a little bread and jam and a tomato and we supped sumptuously. Bill and I then turned in under the lee of a rock and had a good snooze.

Sunday 19th December

Nothing doing in morning. Harry and I were yarning up in the roof bivvy in the afternoon when the NZ newspaper mail arrived and we spent the afternoon in perusing Dominions, Evening Posts, Yachtsmen and etc. The column about the Dardanelles by Frank Jolly was very interesting. We also noticed the death of Mr Gunner Griffiths of Seatoun - killed at the Dardanelles. Was very pleased to hear that Harry Pettit had been saved from the "Marquette", sunk in the Aegean. Also received some writing material from Sam S and a roll of butter muslin from Gay. Some of the boys went over to the beach in the afternoon and found a lot of gear coming ashore, evidently from some wreck or torpedoed vessel. Dozens of crates of preserved eggs were among the articles washed ashore.

Monday 20th December.

In the morning (2 a.m.) the boss, Sergeant Mac and Bill Callick went down the line to see about establishing communication with El Omaied (Capt Johnson's post). We have been trying hard for helios but so far have been unsuccessful. It is a pity they are so scarce as this is ideal country for them. A good supply of canteen stuff came up by train - also gift stuff for the Australians. We have made quite a comfortable bivvy on the roof. It is grand for reading and writing in during the heat of the day.

Tuesday 21st December

It turned out a lovely day and Jack Hare and myself went for a ride across to the beach soon after breakfast. After walking about two miles along the coast we had a decent swim and then got back in time for lunch. The sand on the beach is very fine pumice stuff and rocks are all of white limestone - curious formations. We came across a case of condensed milk which had come ashore but which was sour. The boss, Mac and Bill came back by the 2 p.m. train and also brought trophies from the beach in the shape of flags which they found on the beach near Sidi Abdel, Rahman. The boss, Bill Mackay and Sergeant Mac biked to the lighthouse in the evening to try to get Ghazal Station with the lamps.

Wednesday 22nd December

Nothing doing in morning. We borrowed three helios from the Yeomanry in the afternoon and biked down the line to try and get in communication with Sidi Abdel Rahman. Finding a suitable hill we talked with the lighthouse at Dabaa and also with Rahman (Corp. Tonks). The road out is hard and smooth and coming back we cut the distance (6 miles) in 21 mins. Some mail arrived in the afternoon but none for us. News has just come through about the evacuation of the Dardanelles and caused a good deal of surprise in camp.

Thursday 23rd December

The dust is blowing about again and things are almost as miserable as the first few days after we arrived here. We had nothing else to do except keep out of the dust as much as possible. Xmas is very near now and the canteen is well stocked. A lot of Xmas billies and plum puddings have arrived for the Australians but none for us so far.

Friday 24th (Xmas Eve)

Xmas Eve in the desert and evidently the eve of other important events as well. We had orders in the morning to be ready for moving any time and to pack all our signalling staff. The same order was given to the machine gun section and we fully expected to leave in the evening or on Xmas day - for an unknown destination as usual. We have no idea where our next shift will be to - possibly Mersa Matruh, perhaps Salonika. One enjoys travelling a deal more if destination is unknown as the expectation and curiosity breaks the monotony. Sergeant Mac and the boss shouted beer for all hands and we had

a good time. As our NZ Xmas stuff had not arrived the Australians gave us about a dozen cases of billies and plum duffs sent from Tasmania. That was a Xmas present and no mistake! There is a great camaraderie between the colonials. It was quite a Xmas scene when the billies were opened in the tent. They contained tinned fruit, handkerchiefs, bovril, writing material and all sorts of odds and ends useful to us. Not the least valued of the contents were the cards in each one which the Tasmanian girls had written their greetings to us. A red flag over the door gave to the scene an air of carnival. To "cap the lot" letters arrived from home which completed our enjoyment.

Saturday 25th (Xmas Day)

No further order had come out about leaving and work was declared off for the day except for the unfortunates who had to do patrol and sentry duty. I think the most notable incident was the eating of the Xmas dinner. Plum pudding was the main item on the menu of course and was backed up by tinned fruit with unsweetened milk. Tinned salmon, herrings, strawberry jam and cake and drinks helped to complete the sumptuous repast. We enjoyed it nearly as much as a Xmas dinner at home and if it had not been for the absence of home friends we would have enjoyed it more so. It seems rather irrelevant to harp so much on tucker, but the fact is, there is very little else to interest one here. I took photos of our tens and their habitants with the remains of the feast in the foreground. I went along to Harry's tent in the evening and had a yarn with some of the old platooners. They turned on cakes and other drinkables and eatables and we had a fitting Xmas supper. Some of us spent the afternoon in writing to our Tasmanian donors and home of course.

Sunday 26th (Boxing Day)

Still no definite orders about shifting camp. There was a short church service in the morning which a good many of the chaps attended. In the afternoon four of us, including Harry, biked across to the beach and had a decent swim. It came on showery as we were coming back and we had to go some. Some of the tommies have been transferred to the armoured train and the Ghurkas seem to be preparing to leave. It has been a great spell for them on the train as they have seen some solid fighting. I am sure they are itching to get at it again though.

Monday 27th December

We expected to get away by the afternoon train, but were again disappointed. However by all accounts we should get away tomorrow when the tommies come up to relieve us. News has come through that the first battalion (E.L.O.) had a dust up with the enemy at Matruh on Xmas Day. They spent a better Xmas than we did, especially as their casualties were very slight. We are eagerly looking forward to seeing some of the firsts so as to get full details of the scrap.

Tuesday 28th December

Most of the morning was spent in making the final preparations for entraining. A newspaper mail came in at 2 p.m. and we put them away in our kits to read later. The troop train with our relief arrived about 4 p.m. and brought about fine platoons of the Essex who had seen fighting in the Dardanelles. They looked a good deal better than the Middlesex who had been in camp with us. They had evidently had an uncomfortable journey as they were packed close in tow trucks. Soon after they detrained, we were paraded ready for entraining. However something always turns up for the signallers at the last moment. Just before we scrambled into the trucks the boss got orders to the effect that one of us had to stay and manage the phones for a few days. At first I was detailed for this job but on Bill Callick's suggestion we drew lots and the choice unfortunately fell on himself. I was not looking forward to the job much and was glad to get out of it. We finally bundled ourselves into the truck about 5.45 p.m., about 40 in each, and made ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. We steamed out of the station at 6 p.m. to the cheers of the Australians and Tommies. The Australians got a great rally from us as we passed their lines. There were few, if any, who were not glad to leave El Dabaa although all of us will remember it as the place where we spent Xmas 1915. The travelling was not quite as comfortable as by first class

Thursday 16th March

More signalling work and swimming. We shifted to a new tent in the afternoon. Have to be up at 3.30 AM tomorrow for route march so must turn in.

Friday 17th March - St Pat's Day

The route march was not so strenuous as anticipated as a cool breeze was blowing. We went out about 6 or 7 miles and got back to camp about 10.45 AM. Swimming parade as usual in the afternoon. It was very hot about midday. The band gave us suitable music in the evening which was greatly appreciated.

Saturday 18th March

Very windy and dusty. A kit inspection came off in morning out in full blast of wind and sand. Gen Birdwood was in camp during the day. Duff on the menu for tea. Bill Callick had word of a probable transfer to the Div Sig - lucky beggar! We will all be sorry to miss him if he does go. The flies are getting a regular pest now - especially at meal times. One is apt to swallow them in jam or tea if not careful.

Sunday 19th March

Church parade as usual at 9 AM. I saw a good many chaps I knew in the 3rd and 4th Battalions. Noel Hayes, Noel Johnson and two other coll. boys. I also saw Lieutenant Ken Clayton later in the day. The advance parties of the 3rd and 4th Bn left for Moascar in the afternoon. Frank came across in the evening and we had a bit of a yarn about things in general. According to persistent rumours we are due to sail before the end of the month for France. News has come to hand that the first party of the 2nd Aust Division is in Orleans. That looks promising for us. Orders about shifting to Moascar.

Monday 20th March

Packed up and marched off for Moascar at about 9 AM. It was an easy march. On the way down we saw the Prince of Wales evidently out for a constitutional. He looked much better than depicted by photos we had seen of him. I also saw Harry MacFarlane and Bert Marshall. We arrived at the old camp about 11.30 AM and found tents pitched ready for us. After the usual muddle up we finally got settled down all in one tent. Cyril Petersen came across in the evening.

Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd March

We have it from the officers that we embark very shortly for France. Secret entraining and embarkation orders are said to be out. Our time is therefore taken up in reorganising and refitting. New gear is being supplied and our field and base kits have to be reduced to regulation weight necessitating the throwing out of a good deal of private stuff. Bill Callick has been transferred to the Div Sigs. We are all very sorry to leave him out of our roll. A small paper mail arrived in the evening. Expecting more tomorrow and also, what is more important, letters. Inoculated on Wednesday morning. (Prom. offered Vice Cpl Tonks)

Thursday 23rd March

We were all very sore and out of sorts as the result of yesterday's inoculation. Paper mail was arriving continuously all day and the tent was a regular reading room for some time afterwards. The "Free Lances" and "Strands" are very much appreciated. Some gift goods were issued during the day including tobacco and cigarettes from the "Dominion" fund and barley sugar from Amateur Sports Effort. The "Yellow Three Castles" were a godsend to many as they are unobtainable here.

continued northing up the western coast of the island. Passed the islands of Antioco and San Petro in that order. We were still in sight of the coast at nightfall, having passed the towns of Alghero and Porto Torres which could be seen quite plainly. The island to the north was also sighted. Some of the cliffs on the coast are very sheer and must be at least 200 ft high. Extensive cultivation seems to be carried on round the towns. The reason for hugging the coast is evidently to avoid submarines. Boat stns as usual in the morning and medical inspection. Two bulky gas helmets were issued to each man, one to be worn inside the tunic. It should fumigate one if it does nothing else. An Italian destroyer came out about 10 AM and escorted us for about 5 miles. Cheers were exchanged as she passed us. She seemed very unseaworthy as she wallowed very badly in the very small sea that was running. We also passed several Italian or Sicilian brigantines.

Wednesday 12th April

During the night a strong squally, n-westerly gale came up and in the morning we had slowed down to just enough speed for steerage way. A good many of the boys were ill and it was miserable altogether. We speeded up some before midday but only recorded 122 miles for 24 hours. However the wind went down and we did a good 9 knots during the afternoon. During most of this time we were playing bridge. Sighted the French coast about 3 PM and made Marseilles just at nightfall. We anchored in the stream for the night. Three other transports are close by.

Thursday 13th April (MARSEILLES)

It turned out fine and we pulled into the wharf early in the morning. The morning was spent in making final preparations for disembarking. We formed up on the wharf at 2.30 PM and finally marched off at 5 PM. Trekking it through the streets to the tune of the band, we got a good hearing from the townsfolk. We did not have much of a chance to see the town but we saw many new sights. The French uniforms were very striking, the plentiful daubing of red being a pleasant change for the eyes. Batches of German prisoners being marched through the streets caused a lot of interest. They looked a sturdy, if a trifle stodgy lot. It was great to see the fairer sex once again and they seemed to be interested with us. We stopped alongside a railway siding about 5.30 PM and after having a small snack filed into the waiting carriages! They say it is a 60 hrs journey and as there is no room to lie down we should not be too comfortable.

Thursday 13th - Saturday 15th April

("Through France on a troop train" Marseilles - Lyons - Paris - Calais - Steenbecque)

Travelling by train in New Zealand or Egypt is a rather monotonous business at the best but although we did this journey under very uncomfortable conditions it was anything but uninteresting. Sleeping accommodation was very small (28 men in one small carriage), this being the only thing which detracted from the pleasantness of the journey. We had experienced various uncomfortable nights since becoming soldiers but none I think as uncomfortable as the three nights we spent en train. If one slept on the floor he was sure to be trodden on and sleeping on the seats was sure to call forth curses from someone. However the places we saw more than compensated us for this trifle. We are travelling altogether for about 60 hrs - the longest train journey I have ever had - stopping very seldom and then generally to draw rations etc. The country passed through was good to look upon inasmuch as the season rendered everything green. For the most part the land seemed extensively cultivated. The strange thing seemed to be that youthful life was practically extinct except for the soldiers seen en route. Women and old men at practically all jobs every where - all working cheerfully for their country and a good cause. They gave us a great cheering as we passed through as we gave them also. The cities and towns passed through were all very interesting, especially Lyons, Dijon and the outskirts of Paris. Leaving a siding in Marseilles at 8 PM on Thursday night we were soon passing through interesting country although we could not see much. Arles (Bouches-du-Rhone), Avignon (Vaucluse) and Tarascon, all on the Rhone) are big towns, the former being surrounded by huge railway workshops. All the towns to the

continual "strafing" of aeroplanes. Thousands of shells are wasted by the anti-aircraft artillery in attempting to hit these elusive mechanical birds. We often watch a white "Taube" getting a hot time directly overhead - her course being marked by hundreds of white shell bursts (shrapnel). Once we heard two planes firing at each other with machine guns. Whenever an enemy plane nears our lines a perfect tornado of fire breaks out. We discovered some good shops today while meandering through the town. Judging by outward appearances one would think that there was no live shop in the place but behind broken doors, walls and shutters there is a deal of business going on.

Thursday 18 May 1916 - Aux tranches

A most eventful day! Through the kindness of an uncle of Windy Dey's I had the experience of visiting the firing line with Windy. Riding bikes we took the road leading SW from the town. There was not a building in this road which had not been hit with shell or shrapnel. In the fields close by we could see the observation post of the NZ batteries who are now doing their share of firing. About a mile out from the outskirts we left our bikes alongside a broken down barn and donned our steel helmets. Another fifty yards brought us to the reserve trenches where Captain Dey's company was quartered. After half an hour spent in looking round at the signalling arrangements Captain Dey took us the rounds of the trenches. It proved very interesting going up through the saps and we took special note of line work etc. Coming to the firing line itself where there is no trench but a solid sandbag parapet, things began to get more interesting. The first thing that struck us was the small number of men on duty at the parapet - groups of about five every 25 yds! All the rest were sleeping in their dug-outs. Coming to a party with a periscope we were able to see the German trenches about 200 yds away - a rather uncanny sight I might state! We elicited the information the snipers were not very active just then so we carefully peered over the top of the parapet and had a good view of the enemy's trenches and the barb wire in between. Some reports close by reminded us that our position was not too safe so we soon ducked down again. Several times after this we took a hurried glimpse of "No Man's Land" over the top. We were very much struck with the enormous amount of barb wire used on "knife rests" for entanglements. These had been put out at night by special parties - a rather exciting job. Looking through a telescope resting in a specially constructed loophole I caught a glimpse of two or three moving objects behind "Fritz's" trenches - evidently helmets. From all appearances the trenches must be practically impregnable judging by the machine gun positions etc. As they said it was about the usual time for "Fritz" to send over some "whizz bangs". The skipper judged it was about time for us to be getting back so we started off down Wine Street. Just past the second line the communication trenches lead under cherry trees! Green fruit on them too. It seemed very strange in such surroundings to see fruit trees bearing. We got back to the reserve dug-outs safely and had dinner at the Officers Mess. While here, a "Jack Johnson" landed close by and we got a bit of a shock. I was not very sorry when we got back to our billets. It was a most interesting day and it gave us some idea of what we will get shortly. It was a matter of taking French leave to get out there but it was well worth it.

Friday 19 May

In the morning we were engaged in laying lines to our companies. Some shrapnel landed in B Coy's quarters but did no damage. Bill Callick came in to see us in the evening. He had been repairing lines out in the 2nd Brigade's trenches and had some exciting experiences to relate. A tin of butterscotch from Annie came to hand which was greatly appreciated. I also received a letter from Aunt Maggie at St Brienc, here in France. I got a surprise as I thought she was in London.

Saturday 20 May

Nothing much doing today. I was in shift at telephone during day and consequently had to stay about the place. Sad news has just come to hand. One of my old pals of No 1 Platoon, "Scotty" Freebairn was killed while out on fatigue work at the trenches last night - the first casualty in our battalion. There were also twelve casualties among the Australians by a bomb dropped near the railway station. It is great to hear the shells

shrapnel bursts just behind us at headquarters and provides us with a deal of nerve racking suspense. We have come upon one new phase of signalling communication here - the pigeon service. It is a novelty to see these birds sent away with messages. We always have two here at headquarters.

Friday 26 May

Patrolling the wires most of the day. The 1st Bn had a few casualties in the morning. In the evening Fritz shelled the entrances to Spain and Gloucester Avenues and also pumped a few into the front parapets. I think our batteries gave more than we got though. Some wire was successfully laid by our men out in "No Man's Land" during the night. One is getting into the habit of instinctively ducking his head behind the top of the trenches when shots are fired especially at night when star shells suddenly illuminate the whole place at short regular intervals. Snipers have been rather too prevalent round HQ lately and one has to be very careful. We have to be careful also about smoke etc and are supplied with charcoal to feed the braziers with. We now get a good view of aeroplane strafing. Two casualties.

Saturday 27 May

Fairly quiet today. No casualties. Everyone managed to dodge the shells today. Just about tea time some of our batteries opened up for about ten minutes on the German lines. One could hardly hear himself speak. It was some strafe! Most of our time is spent these days sitting in the dug-outs reading etc as they afford some protection from the ever present shrapnel. We are getting a little used to the strafing now but I hardly think a chap could ever feel absolutely at ease.

Sunday 28 May

It turned out a grand day and things were on the whole quiet all day. It was the hottest day we have had for some time. In the evening we witnessed some daring manoeuvres by a biplane piloted by one of our most daring aviators who is known by the soubriquet of the "Mad Major". He flew low over the Boshes' Cives for about ten minutes and was staffed by anti-aircrafts and machine guns continuously. It was marvellous that he was not hit and we felt good when he came back leaving a long trail of shrapnel bursts behind him.

Monday 29th May

Very quiet today except for a few shells sent over by Fritz during the day and rifle and machine gun fire at night. There was a good bit needed doing to the wires today and it was a good opportunity to fix them.

Tuesday 30th May

Matters are always lively up overhead these days. Fritz and JB always have "sausages" up observing. There is plenty of aircraft "strafing" going on and one has to take care to dodge the falling anti-aircraft shrapnel. It can easily be heard coming down and the best thing to do on hearing same is to dive into a dug-out if one be handy.

At 5 PM John Bull began to put them over into Fritz. Our artillery behind bombarded their lines for about 15 mins. There must have been a good deal of damage done. Anyway there was a regular inferno of shell discharge and when the Huns retaliated there was something doing. We were handy to our dug-outs at the time and were glad of it. It was great to hear old J Bull bark! We are just beginning to take trench life as a matter of course now and are becoming adept at patrolling the "duck-boards"; nevertheless we are all looking forward to a spell out shortly. A chap soon gets very dirty here and is liable to become "nervy". A novel gas-helmet for the pigeons arrived in the evening. This war is responsible for many strange things.

Wednesday 31 May

Looking over the wires most of the day. We were rather disappointed to find that we have to stay in the trenches longer than the eight days scheduled us. In the evening however we were glad of this change as Fritz had evidently got wind of our supposed departure and commenced a furious strafing. If we had been going out via Houplines we would have got it badly. As it was it was quite bad enough and we had a number of near chances. The shells were bursting evenly over part of the area and a few high explosives landed just above HQ where we were sitting. One burst just outside and a blast of smoke, flame, shrapnel and dirt blew in through the window. Down by our dug-out some big high explosives landed very close and left some gaping holes in the trench. A little to the left of this a shell landed in a 3rd Bn dug-out and exploded, killing three and wounding two. They made a terrible mess of Spain Avenue and Houplines. It was an anxious time for us "new-uns"! It is reckoned that nothing like this was ever experienced at Gallipoli. I think in retaliating our guns put over more than they got which was reassuring to say the least. Jack Hare, Mexted, Dey, Goulding and myself had a good deal of work on the lines until after midnight and incidentally had some close shaves. One bullet went very close to me. We managed to find our mail at about 1 AM in the morning and it was very specially welcome at that time. It is good to know that some at home remember us.

Thursday 1st June

A day full of incident! The "strafing" in the morning was tremendous - the worst experienced in this sector for 14 months. We believed that there was an attack in the wind but nothing came of it. Our guns must have been stinging Fritz badly for some time and he opened out on us about 11.30 AM using some new batteries. I was up in the "Orchard" with Tom Goulding looking over the wires when the strafing commenced and we clung tenaciously to what little shelter the dug-out provided. The shelling soon developed into a regular inferno and we were expecting every moment to be our last. Trees, iron, dirt and anything hit were thrown high in the air and noise was terrifying. It is hard to describe one's feelings on such an occasion. Two or three shells burst near the roof which is not very thick and shook us up bodily and mentally. After about 15 mins of this there was a lull and we looked at each other and realised how pale we were. After testing it was found that the orchard sig.stn. was cut off from everyone, all wires being cut, so Tom and I set out to do our best. We had not gone far however when Fritz started again with redoubled fury. I think we did the distance back to the dug out in record time. Some bits of shrapnel whistled very close before we got inside. Our guns took a hand in things this time and the strafing was even more terrible than before. When it was finally over we held out our hands and found them shaking like a leaf. The "Dinkums" have indeed had their christening and a rough one at that. We have heard that our other battalion on our right and left are also getting it hot. Our casualties were rather severe including Capt Christophers killed and Jack Hare had been hit. He was out repairing wires near Strong Point at the time when the second shelling commenced and was hit in the eye by a piece of the same shell which killed Capt Christophers. It is a blow to us all to lose Jack especially as we hear that he is likely to lose an eye. Capt Christophers was one of our most popular officers and his loss will be felt by the whole battalion. He was sheltering in a trench when a shell burst about 3ft away and blew away part of his head, also wounding Jack Hare. His steel helmet was pierced through and through and death must have been instantaneous. He was indeed unlucky and we also at losing such a good man. After the bombardment the whole of our area was a regular shambles. Harry got it fairly hot up at London Road. (4 killed, 10 wounded) Our old Colonel (Colonel Stewart) is an inspiring figure these days. He sets us all a splendid example and is always about the trenches or out in "No Man's Land". We were patching up wires in the afternoon and found it no easy or pleasant job. Later in the afternoon a good deal of excitement was caused by one of our observation balloons breaking away. We saw two observers come down in parachutes and then all the anti-aircraft guns nearby gave her a "strafing", their object evidently being to prevent her drifting into the hands of the enemy. The last we saw of her she had not been hit. This was Fritz's chance. He must have known of course that we were all watching. This air drama and he suddenly sent over a salvo of shrapnel. Luckily only one or two were hit. Trench life has no attractions for me. To sit in a dug-out and be shelled seems to be the

essence of madness. If we were on the move it would be different. The only exciting part about it is when one happens to be out on the wires when a strafing commences. That's where the sporting element comes in.

Friday 2nd June

During the morning the welcome news came to hand that we were to be relieved by the Canterbury boys at 4 PM. We got down to Houplines Dump safely and were not sorry to see the last of the trenches for a few days. Arriving in town about 6 PM we found that new billets had been allotted but we soon made ourselves comfortable and prepared for a good night's sleep.

Saturday 3rd June

Three of us went on telephone shift at HQ at 10 a.m and got away for a bath and clean "clobber" in the afternoon. We then proceeded to satisfy our "inner-men" and settle down in our new quarters. A big naval gun was firing in the afternoon and served to remind us that the trenches were not far off. On shift 2-6 a.m.

Sunday 4th June

Our new billet is very roomy and houses nearly the whole battalion. It is or was a textile factory and all the machinery has been left intact. Frank came round in the afternoon and Harry and he and I had a yarn together. Bill MacKay and Robie and I visited the New Zealand cemetery later on. Here we noticed the graves of all our unlucky ones - Captain Christophers's right on the end of the line. Some paper mail arrived today and brought plenty of interesting home news and also much needed (RMH) socks.

Monday 5th June

This morning news of the great naval battle came to hand and owing to the misleading account given by the Admiralty we were at first inclined to believe that it was a German victory but afterwards recognised it as a definite victory for us. The toll of lives was the worst part of the business. In the evening Frank and I went to see a good programme of pictures at the Soldiers Club. It seemed funny to be attending a picture show in a place like this.

Tuesday 6th June

A welcome parcel mail came to hand bringing a decent one for me. A heavy bombardment after midnight rather startled us.

Wednesday 7th June

Nothing much doing today except writing, reading and playing cards. My name has gone into HQ preliminary to Robie and I taking some course in aerial signalling. I hope to score an aeroplane trip shortly. There was much surprise and sorrow here today when the news of Kitchener's death came to hand. There is indeed a deal of truth in the adage that "misfortunes never come singly". For some reason our C Company has just left for Morbecque.

Thursday 8th and Friday 9th June

On telephone duty. Letter writing and reading most of time. A few days ago Bill MacKay and Robie discovered a "strawberry shop" down behind the church. We have been feasting on strawberries ever since - the best I have ever tasted.

Saturday 10th, Sunday 11th and Monday 12th June

Very little doing for us this weekend. Most of our time is spent either at headquarters on telephone duty, at fatigue work in the trenches (a new job they have pushed on to the

Thursday 13th - Saturday 15th July

Last Monday night one of our patrols got badly knocked about. Out of the four who went out (Moore, Murdock, Holdway and Pennyfather) only one got back - Moore. The rest lay dead out in "No Man's Land", killed by bombs and machine gun fire. During the next few days some splendid work was done by Corp LeComte in bringing in the bodies of the unfortunates. On Thursday night my old platoon (No 2) got badly cut about during a trench-mortar engagement. While relieving C Coy up in the salient a German "plum-pudding" came over the parapet and landed right in their midst, killing four and wounding five. Most of the unfortunate ones I knew well, Cec. Collins and Barcoo being old tent mates of mine. These same trench mortars are devilish things. On Friday night we had a bit of a "straff" until 2 a.m. in the morning, but we were very lucky in only losing about three men. The 4th Bn conducted a raid about 10.30 p.m. on this night but when they got across to the Hun trenches found only dead Huns there, the rest having retired to "funk-holes" in their supports. The raiding party sustained casualties amounting to 3 killed and seven wounded. Some nights before this the 4th Coy 1st Otago Bn had a very bad time while on a raiding stunt. Only 20 out of the company remained unwounded. While bunched together waiting to charge, Fritz's shrapnel caught them - evidently clever spy work somewhere.

Sunday 16th July - Tuesday 18th July

Sunday quiet. On Monday night Carl Walker was killed by a sniper while changing over from C7A to C39A. This same sniper has been causing a good deal of trouble of late, having hit three others. Carl was the first signaller we have lost killed. He was very popular with us all and we feel his loss keenly. Fritz's artillery strafed intermittently all day with no casualties to us. On Sunday night a parcel mail arrived - just at the right time - bringing five for me. We had a royal super in the signal dug-out. There seems to be something momentous in the air just now but we hope to go back for a bit of a spell before we get into the advance. The news from the Somme has been very good lately and has cheered us wonderfully. There are rumours that the Australians are advancing on our right. By the bombarding that has been in progress down there during the last 24 hours there is sure "something doing". Tuesday passed without any incident worthy of note except for a little shelling.

Wednesday 19th July - Friday 21st July

Things began to liven up some during Wednesday. In the afternoon we had to move out of the culvert as it was wanted for a dressing station. We found fairly good "possies" elsewhere. About 8 p.m. the uproar started. All that we knew until it was all over was that we were going to bombard for some time to let the 1st Bn raiding party get out. However there turned out to be more doing than we had supposed. Fritz had also planned a raid on our sector for the same night and had also mined our salient. His artillery opened out about the same time as ours and what with trench mortars, bombs, mines and smoke there was a regular inferno until about midnight. During a lull we had a good view of the operations. It was a sight I will never forget. We felt lucky to come out whole. Fritz got into our trenches and we got into his and there was hell for a few minutes. Our party found his trenches full of dead and evidently he had much the worst of the business. However our losses were heavy owing to a great extent to the mine explosions in the salient. Our casualties in the battalion amounted to:-

7 killed, 22 wounded and 3 missing. 1st Bn had 7 wounded while the trench mortar battery sustained about 12 killed and wounded as the result of a mine explosion under them. Most of them were blown up or buried and many had very lucky escapes. Another of the signallers, Pat O'Leary, was wounded. Away on our right the Australians were evidently attacking as the smoke clouds were thick and voluminous. Later we got news that the 5th Australian Division had met with success over a 3 mile front.

Soon after dinner on Friday we were startled by hearing a heavy explosion up near the salient. We were soon standing to arms thinking it was caused by an enemy mining stunt under the salient. However it turned out that someone had accidentally put a pick into a stray trench mortar-bomb while digging, which exploded incidentally detonating a bomb store close by and leaving a huge crater just by our parapet. (30 ft diameter)

Saturday 9th September

Reveille 6 a.m. After a fair snack we marched out in rear of 1st Bn. Just before reaching Fricourt we passed through billets housing the Grenadier Guards and other crack regiments. It was a treat to watch them present arms as we passed. They looked fit to fight anything. We finally halted on the hills near Fricourt and made bivouac for the night. Just after arriving we saw a large naval gun firing just below us. On the ridge opposite we could see the old trenches of two months ago. Some of the boys went up to see these later on and came back with great accounts about the German dug-outs.

One thing I forgot to mention was the large number of German prisoners we saw while marching up. They were either working on the roads or being transported back - and very comfortable they looked too. A good many officers of the brigade went up to see the trenches in the morning and came back in the afternoon. One of the party, Capt Walker, of the 1st Bn was seriously wounded. There are a good many big guns close by firing continuously and away in the distance can be heard the eternal booming of the field guns. As night fell, the bombardment became more intensive and the whole sky was lit up with flashes. We spent a fairly comfortable night although it was rather cold.

Sunday 10th September (Promoted to Lance-Corporal)

Reveille as usual. Church parade at 9 a.m. During the morning some crack Guards battalions marched past on the way to the trenches - Coldstream Grenadiers and Irish. We had not seen a finer body of soldiers since enlisting!! We are expecting to follow them in a few hours into God knows what. We are all trusting that luck will hold that some of us come back safe but of course some will have to go.

Goodbye and good luck for the present anyway

Book left in reserve.

Following from rough notes taken in trenches:

Sunday 10th September

Big bustle in camp after dinner preparing for moving. Gen Godley visited the camp in the afternoon. March out about 5 p.m. leaving valises behind. Passing Montauban and Mamety (or rather what is left of them) we could see what awful havoc our guns had wrought here in the preliminary bombardment. Our guides not being too sure of the road, it was not until about 8 p.m. that we reached the entrance of a communal? trench somewhere behind High Wood and Delville Wood. We passed hundreds of guns of all calibres in action on the way up, some of them giving us the jumps when they fired. It would be impossible to realise the state of things here if one had not been on the spot. The 1st Bn ahead of us had about 34 casualties going up but we were lucky though unfortunate in losing our Pioneer Sergeant Aitken. It was a long walk up the communications sap to the reserve lines but we got fairly comfortable quarters when we got there - an old German gun possey. It seems marvellous how much ground we have won since the offensive began. We took over the signalling from the 7th Kings Reg who however did not leave until early the next morning and consequently we were rather crushed for room.

Wednesday 11th

Roused up at 4.30 a.m. to take over visual station. Took over about an hour afterwards and tested with Brigade with French Camp. Was put on other work during the day but we spent most of our time in watching the shells bursting on the ridge ahead of us. We have a fine view of the ridge between the woods which has been so keenly contested of late. Fritz shelled the supports heavily in the afternoon with heavy stuff. It could not be described in words. There are scores of observation balloons all round us and planes fly over by the dozen. Our guns are never silent and we do not envy Fritz his position. Tucker and water are scarce and one has to be very economical. God knows what things will be like after we "go over". Our advance is to be some big affair from all accounts. This is just a preliminary.

Saturday 16th September

Back on the report station and out of the real action though we get plenty of shelling. Just before dark last night Harry hobbled down with a gammy leg and got away alright down to the dump and no doubt to "Blighty". He seems quite happy and was indeed lucky to get off with what he did. The 1st Bde was supposed to attack early this morning but we have not heard how they progressed. Our casualties have been rather heavy especially as regards officers. Our doctors (Beuham) and stretcher bearers have been working like trojans. Theirs is indeed an unenviable job. We have got all sorts of souvenirs and revolvers, note-books, helmets etc etc. Harry came back with a mauser revolver and a German sheath knife. Spent an uncomfortable night being constantly shelled.

Sunday 17th September

On waking we were ordered back to Carlton trench with the rest of the Bn in reserve and very glad we were to be back even to this temporary refuge. Here we were reorganised and found to have sustained something over 300 casualties including Major Childs and Captain Baydon killed and about 60 others also killed. It was a sad muster. However, we satisfied our craving stomachs with something worth eating and felt much better. It is rumoured that we will have to go back "up there" again very shortly. It is not pleasant to anticipate, but I suppose we will have to carry on though weary and worn. Pottered about all day eating and snatching what sleep we could. Just before dark some excitement was caused by the sight of either cavalry or light artillery advancing in line up the hill to the left of our sector. It was a stirring sight. During the night there was a steady bombardment though it rained heavily.

Monday 18th September

We awoke to find our feet and legs wet through. Our "bivvy" is only about 5ft long, dug into the clay and consequently there is no room to stretch. Carlton Trench (what a name!) presents a most miserable spectacle and we all feel rather down in the dumps at the prospect. To make matters worse, word came down in the afternoon to the effect that we have to relieve the 2nd Bde in the evening. We had been comforting ourselves that our part in the Somme battle was finished, but alas, our hopes were badly shattered. We drew all deficiencies and rations before tea and after a hurried snack we made a start up to Orchard Trench again in pouring rain. It was a two hour scramble in the mud and we were wet through before starting. Arrived at Orchard Trench we found that our destination was further to the left at the junction of Wood Lane and Lea Trench. Headquarters turned out to be a few shell holes in the mud. Most of us had never spent such a miserable night in our lives before. It was a deal worse when we found it still raining in the morning of -

Tuesday 19th September

"Drowned rats" would be a mild term with which to describe us. If those in New Zealand could only see us now! Rather strange that at this period, the fact of being so knocked up with wet and cold and little sleep and mud affected us more than shell fire. We did not seem to notice the shells which were constantly dropping rather close. The place is a shambles and we see no prospect of being relieved. Fritz's batteries were very active in the evening, dropping a deal of heavy stuff near us and incidentally silencing one of our guns and killing 5 artillery men near us. Aeroplane activity also caused some diversion. There were numerous air fights and one of our planes unfortunately had to land about 600 yds in front of us. The night was bad and we were wet and cold but nevertheless managed to doze a little in the mud. The rum issue was good for its warming effect.

Wednesday 20th September

Still showery and cold. Still shelling. Still down in the dumps but playing the cheerful idiot as far as possible. Rations scarce but good. Some of the bivvies have been

collapsing to the great discomfort of their occupants and to our great amusement. We have just been issued with 3 sandbags per man, presumably to keep our feet warm. Shelling continues and wounded are constantly being carried down - six men to one stretcher made necessary by the state of the ground. It is a terrible job floundering through the mud and it is a long and tedious route down to the dressing station. Poor wounded! Still, one wishes at times for a slight wound (a "backshee") This is the hardest time we have ever experienced and Harry is indeed lucky.

Thursday 21st September

Turned out a finer day than usual and we were able to warm and dry ourselves a little. We might have expected what was to follow however. Before dinner we got word that we had to relieve the 2nd Bde in the front line. They have been having a bad time repelling a counter attack and their position is precarious. Casualties have been heavy. In the afternoon I took a run down to Bde to see about phoning. Inky brought up a welcome parcel for me containing malted milk tabs from home - just came at night time. Reg Pointon had to leave us at this point en route for hospital as he was feeling very bad. Sergeant Mac and Jack Smith went up to look out our new position and Jack came back and then guided us up. As soon as we got into a little shelf in Flers Trench Fritz's "wiz bangs" began to come over and we considered ourselves lucky that we were not out in the open. After some delay we found a good "possy" for four of us in an old German dugout called "Zum Sachsenkeiller" where we spent a fairly comfortable night although we had a few uninvited guests. It seems funny sleeping in a German dugout smoking German cigars!! - and good cigars they are too. It is marvellous what elaborate arrangements the Hun makes for his safety and comfort. Just before we arrived here Sergeant Mac and Jack witnessed a bombing fight in which our boys gave Fritz a good beating.

Friday 22nd September

Awoke to find aeroplanes hovering above us and shelling going on as usual. Arrangements have been made for us to bivvy at the dressing station, four of us remaining on shift here for 12 hours. We are practically in the village of Flers, but there is very little of the village intact. It was rather an exciting day as word came through that Fritz was massing to attack the village. Nothing came of it however except a rather heavy bombardment. Jack Smith did some good work on the lines and we were complimented by the Colonel on our work. We discovered a fine vegetable patch in the village and although a risky business managed to gather some and concocted a fine stew. Water was also found in the village so we are in luck's way for rations. Rations and water are always kept prominent in our minds these days.

Some of the Royal Berks Regiment who were in our trenches told us that they had no rations for 48 hours !!!

Fancy sitting in a German dugout smoking cigars and eating from one of their fine aluminium stew pots - that compensates for a good deal. There were not very many casualties in the Bn. during the day. "Pip" & Co relieved us at 8 p.m. and we went back to the dressing station bivvies. Here we found some fine dugouts - German dugouts recently vacated and regular mansions to us. Lying on a mattress we spent an excellent night undisturbed by shells or gas.

Saturday 23rd September

Turned out a glorious day and we took full advantage of the sun to thoroughly dry ourselves. We spent an interesting morning fossicking around German dugouts. We confiscated several souvenirs including shelter sheets, compressed bandages, telephone equipment, aluminium cooking gear, badges etc. The amount of gear left behind by the Huns is surprising. They must have been quite unprepared for our advance in this sector or else they were deceived by their commanders.

The country beyond Flers looks very fertile and inviting. If there was a second's lull in shell fire one could almost cease to think about war in regarding this perfect landscape. However there is the continual whistling and bursting of shells around us to keep one's mind constantly onto this eternal business. Had an excellent breakfast of bacon and onions and a dinner of perfect stew and tea. In the afternoon we had a glorious airing and rest and talked and thought of home and other subjects.

Just before tea we received the unwelcome news that we were to relieve the 1st Bn. in the village. We were soon on our way and found our posse in a broken down cellar in the centre of the village. 30 ft below us is headquarters in a marvellously constructed dugout. Our telephone is also down below. The dugout is built in long passages fitted up with bunks along the sides - an elaborate underground dwelling about which so much has been written in the papers lately. Here we found excellent German mineral water, cigars and good meat tinned in jelly. The boys who lived here first must have found some fine souvenirs. The 2nd Wellington Battalion Signallers had a bad time during their spell here. A shell came right in through the top of the cellar and unfortunately accounted for about 7 of them. We are fairly secure though as there is continual shelling. One pleasant surprise was in surprise for us - the arrival of some parcel mail. What wonderful organisation there must be in the Army P.O. now. A few English newspapers some days old also leaked through somehow and the news therein was eagerly assimilated by all hands. To read about our own successful part in the advance was very interesting. Dozing in the deep dugout during the night one could imagine oneself on the old "Tahiti". The rumble of shell fire above sounds exactly like the throb of a ship's engines.

Sunday 24th September

Sat low during the morning as it was very unhealthy outside. In the afternoon some of the 1st Bde signallers took over preparatory to their attack on the morrow. To our keen disappointment we got the disheartening (?) news that we were to support them in their attack and perhaps re-attack ourselves. Our boys are just about done up now so God knows how we will get on. Just before leaving to go back to our old positions a shell lobbed clean into the cellar where we were all sitting. It was nothing short of a miracle that none of us were hit. None of us could understand it as it was a clean hit and it covered us with bricks and dust. The peculiar part about it was that Inky was just remarking at the time how lucky the section had been to date. After this severe shaking we were glad to hurry back to TEA TRENCH. Had a good snack in a shell hole on arriving there and afterwards, with the aid of some Hun shelter sheets made a good bivvy. Looking at ourselves in a mirror which we found, our awful unkempt state was brought home to us - no shave, wash or change of clothing for a fortnight. I wish those at home could see us now. We slept well although our heavies were making a hellish din.

Monday 25th September

It turned out fine and we had an airing and a warm snack. It is an anxious time however as we have to be in absolute readiness to move up in support through the barrage. It will be a strenuous ordeal again I expect. At 12.15 p.m. our artillery opened up with redoubled fury and a terrific bombardment commenced. The 1st Bde boys were attacking soon after this. Later in the afternoon we heard that their attack had been quite successful with light casualties. To our right we could see some of the division on our right advancing over a ridge. Fritz's barrage was very heavy but ours was six times as bad. It was interesting to see the lines of prisoners coming in - some of them carrying our wounded. I guess they are thanking their lucky stars that their voluble "mercy kamarades" were successful in keeping back our bayonets. During this attack, as in the previous ones, our planes absolutely dominated the air. Our balloons (25 behind us) were towed along by motors as the infantry attacked and they must have done some very useful work. The Maoris have been doing great work digging and consolidating trenches. The "caterpillars", or "tanks", have again done excellent work near Gendicourt. The French call them "Creme de Menthe" and both their press and ours seems to be making a lot of them. They fully deserve everything miraculous that is said about them. Continuous rumours are afloat about the cavalry going through but, until later, we have no means of getting any authentic news. They are undoubtedly doing fine patrol and

batteries are being put in all round us here making our trench a real danger spot. It is bad enough now God knows. Shrapnel and shell splinters are not to be laughed at.

Saturday 30th September

Another stunt came off today by our battalion in conjunction with a battalion of the London Regt. on our left. Its object was to clear the Huns out of one of their strong points. After the usual preliminary bombardment the bombing and bayonet work commenced and the operation eventually turned out a complete success due mainly to the efforts of our Capt. Barraclough, Lieut Gus and Bomber Sergt McLeod. The latter was unfortunately killed by one of our own bombs after he had done some fine work in reorganising some tommies. I believe he was recommended for special recognition. The N.Z. Div. always seems to be successful in its operations. The general opinion seems to be that our Div. is too good and too heavily reinforced to be given a spell for some time yet. I had a very lucky escape in the afternoon while bending over a fire making some tea. A shell splinter weighing about $\frac{1}{4}$ lb hit me in the back between the shoulder blades with a resounding smack. It knocked me silly for a few minutes but I was happy to find that it was no worse. Later a big bruise developed but barring a very stiff back for a couple of days I was none the worse for the experience. (Did not want those in N.Z. to know when received this diary by post). Actually knocked unconscious and carried out to Field Dressing Station but unfortunately not evacuated. Actually in Dressing Station 3 days under treatment.

Sunday 1st October

I hobbled down to the dressing station in the morning and was glad when the doctor pronounced me only temporarily sore and lucky at that. I am rather proud of my "backsheen" and am keeping the splinter as a souvenir. About 3 p.m. the 2nd Bde (supported by us) had a successful stunt and participated in the taking of l'Eaucourt Abbaye. Our bombardment was terrific in its intensity and Fritz's nothing exceptional. 210 prisoners were taken and severe casualties inflicted on the enemy. "Tanks" also participated in the "stunt" and as usual did good work. Two 14th Reinf. boys had a sudden debut and exit during this affair. They reinforced the 2nd Bde about midday (they had never been in the trenches before) and by 5 p.m. the same day were down at the dressing stn wounded. We begin to look upon ourselves as veterans when things like this happen. Jack Smith has just added a new culinary utensil to our outfit. While exploring in the village he found a coffee-grinder and we utilise this for grinding biscuits. The result is a rather good oatmeal from which we make fine porridge. This is a great time! Some of us have not had a wash or shave for three weeks now and we are feeling intolerably grimy etc. By the Brigadier's request we have just been able to change the old shirts for new ones but this is of not much use as the new ones are dirty from contact already. I often think of Harry lying between sheets at Walton-on-Thames - how lucky is he! The main thing that worries us is our inability to get cables or letters away to let those at home know we are alright to date although it would not be worth while anyway - not until we are out of it altogether. I think we will go almost mad with the reaction when we finally do get out of this awful business.

Monday 2nd October

A restless anxious day for us all. Rain and shells fell indiscriminately. We experienced one of our last disappointments in the afternoon. Instead of being relieved, H.Q. was moved up to Abbaye Rd instead. "Rip", "Windy", Cliff and J. Smith went up to carry on with the 'phone and had a bad time going up in the rain. We have spent two or three very bad nights in the rain lately. Our dugout shows signs of bringing down a few tons of earth on top of us and out in the trenches one cannot move a foot in the mud quick enough to dodge a shell.

Tuesday 3rd October

In the morning Bill M, Nick, J. Smith and I went up to relieve "Pip" and Co at Abbaye Rd. We found it bad enough dodging the shells going up there and when we go there found H.Q. in a very hot corner, the sunken road being constantly shelled. However the "possey" was good and we made ourselves very comfortable under the circumstances. Our

life and losing golden opportunities on account of the war. It is the men with the soft well paid jobs who do not risk their lives who will come out best. It is surprising what a number of fit men there are away back in these cushioned military jobs. They sacrifice nothing. Some of them have a deal better situations than they had in civil life. However we must look at it in a patriotic spirit and we know out here that Fritz is "doing it hard" and that victory for us is only a matter of time - perhaps at the expiration of Kitchener's three years; who knows!!

Sunday 22nd - Saturday 28th October

From Sunday to Thursday inclusive we led the ordinary trench life alternately on telephone duty, eating and sleeping. Nothing at all happened worthy of note until Thursday when we were relieved by the 4th Bn. A four miles march brought us to a billet in Bact St Maur a fair sized town east of Sailly. Here we soon settled down comfortably and had cooking arrangements going to our satisfaction. Friday and Saturday were devoted mostly to refitting and laying telephone lines to the Companies.

There was also a route march on Friday afternoon. A parcel and paper mail arrived on Thursday and came as usual as a godsend. Reinforcements are constantly arriving but this does not cause as much satisfaction as the sooner we are up to full strength the sooner we will be in the Somme again! They will not have a crack division like ours idle for long. The weather has not been so cold lately but no doubt very shortly it will turn colder than ever. On Sat. night there was a heavy bombardment south of us near Neuve Chapelle. Roumania's defeat is not very cheering but the French victory at Verdun is very pleasing. Letter mail came to hand on Sat - a fortnightly N.Z. news to read. We are just hunting up some Xmas cards to send home but as yet have not had much success.

Sunday 29th October - Monday 6th November

During this week most of our time was spent in resting, eating well and sleeping well. As evidence to show that this quieter life was doing us the world of good, our weights as registered by the old station scales had all considerably increased. I turned the scales at 11 stone 2½ lbs - a stone more than when down at the Somme. Our cooks turned out some great concoctions and I think our mess was doing a deal better than the officers' at the finish. It is wonderful how happy and optimistic we have become under this treatment. The Bn. seems to have had a fairly good stock of new clothing etc and we have benefitted by this also. Most of us are still wearing our original Trentham stock hats, however, which says a lot for their quality. One great boon here is the ubiquitous Y.M.C.A. Here we can read, write and partake of refreshment in comfort. Above all we enjoyed the cinema show and concerts which were put on for us by the capable Mr Hannah. One concert especially given by Mr Cory of the Linda Ashwell Concert Party was greatly appreciated.

The one great event of the week was the advent of "Bill" Massey and "Joey" Ward. Early on the morning of the our representatives were decorated with their several honours won at the Somme, "Bill" and "Joey" being present. Here I might state that out of the six military medals awarded to the battalion two were given to members of our signal section (Gowers and "Inky"). Of course these medals are cheaply won compared with other military decorations, but we all feel justly proud of the honour conferred on the old section. After this function the battalion was inspected by "B & J" and in the course of a forceful little address Mr Massey congratulated us on behalf of the N.Z. people on our performances and wished us the best of luck in our future campaigning. It was good to hear and see theing reps of old N.Z. They were accompanied by Gus Godley and Russell and their staffs and altogether it was a great day for the "big ones".

We are all very interested in a new "rag" just out called "The Chronicles of the N.Z.E.F." and edited by Clutha MacKenzie in London. In its pages is published any news about the boys in France, humorous and otherwise, and also progress reports from the hospitals. This last is a boon to us as we are able to trace many of our boys who were evacuated in the rush of the advance. The Divisional Baths are not far away and we have taken full advantage of the luxury they offer.

On Sunday Bill MacKay and I walked into Sailly and enjoyed fossicking round the shops making purchases. We came across Sharpe (late of our Pioneers) down there. He is now cook for Gen Russell and finds it a better job than cooking for the Pioneers. A hard old case is the same Sharpe (ex-sailor)!

On Monday we began our packing early and wandered up to the trenches again in twos and threes to relieve the 11th Bn. We had taken over from them by 2 p.m. and settled down for, I suppose, another ten days. During the afternoon there was a combined trench mortar and artillery stunt. In the course of operations we put our 40 aerial torpedos several hundred "plum-duffs" and 600 stokes mortars into Fritz's lines and smashed up his parapets considerably. His retaliation was fortunately very moderate.

Tuesday 7th November - Sunday 12th November

Things were fairly quiet during these days except for a few raids near us. The weather is bad now and some of the trenches are thigh-deep with water. However we are very comfortable. Fritz has been rather lively of late and we have had several casualties. However, our heavies and "flying pigs" etc have been making things fly some in compensation. His "minnies" have been causing us the most trouble. The front line parapets are very badly knocked about. We are getting excellent rations. The usual trench warfare has been conducted with increased activity with "minnies", "rum jars", "pups (minnies)", milk cans, "flying pigs", "stokes", "pineapples", "plum puddings". Simultaneously with the advent of Fritz's "minnies" etc our "flying pigs", eighteen pounders and heavies open up with, as a rule, good effect. On the whole everything is very quiet for us. There are rumours about a raid being brought off by our Bn. shortly. We sigs. will no doubt draw for places as before.

Monday 13th November - Sunday 19th November

Mon Tues & Wed passed without anything happening worthy of note. On Thursday the 1st Bn on our right successfully (?) raided Fritz's trenches bringing back two overcoats and 1 dud flare!! They did not see a Hun. Over the way they evidently believe in leaving their front line evacuated for our guns to retaliate on. On Friday Fritz was a trifle playful in the afternoon. Besides treating our front line to a steady artillery fire he also sent over a barrage of "minnies". We were lucky in sustaining only a few casualties and wounded. Our batteries were rather slow in retaliating owing to slackness or some other cause. One gun could not continue firing for want of candles. This rather annoyed us. However the bombardment did not last long and things soon quietened down again.

On Sat 18th we experienced the first fall of snow for the season. It was a change to see the ground covered with a white film. During this weather there is always a large gathering to be found round the cookhouse braziers. The 4th Bn. relieved us the same morning and we marched down to our new billets in Fleurbaix (about half way towards our old billets in Bac St Maur). We found these billets very comfortable - sleeping quarters above the St Eloi estaminet and a blacksmiths forgery for a cookhouse. The signalling work as usual is very pleasant as it keeps us off fatigues etc. On Sunday we received the welcome news that Monastre had fallen. Arthur Ponder proceeded to England on Monday morning en route for Officers Training Camp.

Monday 20th November - Monday 27th November - 30th Nov

Very little doing during this week except the usual billet routine. The raiding party has been picked out and is in training. A good letter mail dated from NZ up to Oct 11 came to hand with details about casualties in the Somme fighting. I was very sorry to hear that Sid Gardner and Noel Hayes had been killed. Les, Frank and Arthur came round during the week and we had a yarn about old times etc. I was pleased to see old "Bun" again as I had not seen him since leaving Moascar. The Mdlles Verhille at the Estaminet de St Eloi are very kind and make our life very comfortable and pleasant. I also saw Chas Dempsey who is now in the Brigade P.O. He is going to oblige me by getting my mail through quickly. On Thursday we were given a real treat by the Lena Ashwell concert party. These talented entertainers from London gave two concerts one in the afternoon at Bac St Maur another at Fleurbaix in the evening. We attended both.