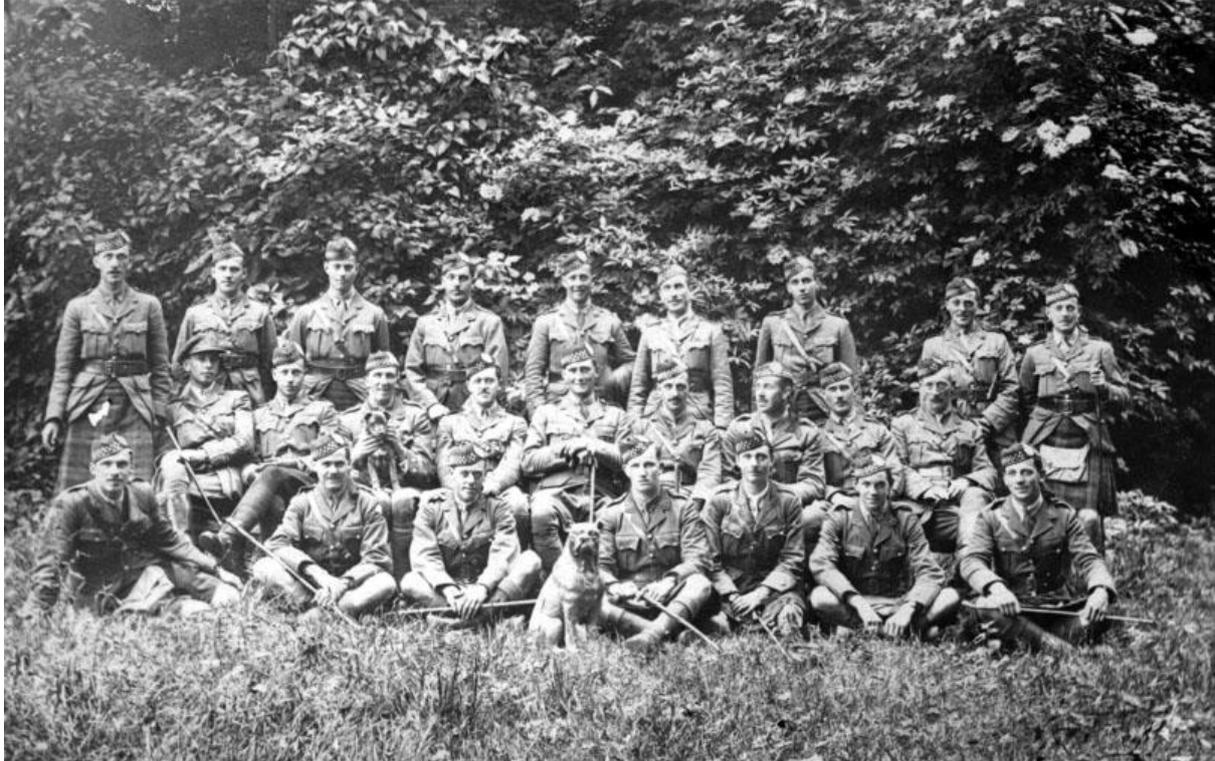


Robert Lindsay Mackay's First World War Diary

This is the First World War Diary of Lieutenant Robert Lindsay Mackay, OBE, MC, MB, CHB, MD, DPH, giving an account of his day-to-day life with the 11th Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders from 1915 until the end of the war.



Robert Lindsay Mackay is front row, 2nd from left. George F MacLeod, later the Very Reverend Lord MacLeod of Fuineray, is at right of Colonel Wilson, our Commanding Officer. "Tobermory", ie Charles A MacLean, is 3rd from the left of the CO David Robertson (later Sir), MP for Caithness (died 1968) is back row, on left as you look at the photo, end man.

Somme 1916

ETAPLES

Monday 4th. Sept. 1916. Recalled from Leave. Ordered "out". Felt very 'bucked' with life. Train to Dunfermline, packed a few things and then off to Edinburgh. Terrific crowds at the station to see our train off. Slept on the floor of a third class corridor with a few drunken Canadians, who, I believe, talked to me most of the night without getting a reply. Cheery souls!

5th. Sept. Breakfast in Regent Palace Hotel, London. Lunch at The Troc! Folkstone crowded out. Transports full, place looked beautiful in the sunshine. Usual escort of destroyers crossing over. Had no regrets, and did no moralising as I saw the white cliffs of Dover recede from view. Horribly sick. We draw a veil here! Put up at the Louvre Hotel, Boulogne, with S.R.Wilson (10th. Argylls, killed 3 weeks later).

6th. Up to the Base, Etaples, which is the last place on earth. Tents, sands, horrible drill instructors, and a rotten adjutant are all I remember of the place, although I was there until 12th. Sept. The atmosphere surrounding the place was rotten.

ALBERT

12th. Sept. Ordered up to the 11th. Service Battalion Argylls - the one to which I most of all wanted to go. Train due to leave at 2 p.m. Left punctually at 4.30 p.m., which is not bad for a French train. Reached Albert on the Somme Front about 6.30 p.m. on the 13th. - a distance of some 70 - 80 miles in 28 hours - not bad going for a French train either! Albert is where the battle now going on began, so I hope to see something decent. Reported to the Details Orderly Room of the 11th. Bn. who heard next day that we were coming. Went along to a park after tea to see our latest form of frightfulness about which mystery hangs, namely, the tanks. They have not been used against the enemy yet. Heyworth (who joined with me) and I then went along to the Divisional Reinforcement Camp at Mericourt.

14th. Sept. Loafed around.

MARTINPUICH

15th. Heyworth and I wakened up early in the morning and told to proceed up the line. Got our 'skates on'. By 11 a.m. we had passed Contalmaison, now a heap of ruins, then we got under shell fire on the Bazentin Road. Passed over the Switch Line, and down towards Martinpuich.

There had been a big show this morning. With the Canadians on the left and the 50th. Division (?) on the right, the old 15th. Scottish Division had gone forward. Martinpuich, Courcellette and Flers had fallen. Our people suffered heavily from our new gunfire methods - the barrage - to which our men were not accustomed. Found what remained of the Battalion in a half-dug trench just South of the Western edge of Martinpuich. Reported to Lieut. McClure, the senior officer. Found Orr, McAinsh, and others whom I knew. Quite a lot of dead all over the place. We had met large numbers of wounded on the way up.

Well! Here we were shelled for three days by the old Hun, fortunately most of his stuff went 50 yards over, though we did have a few people laid out now and then. Found a dug-out, but rarely went to it. Weather beautiful. It was somewhat interesting to a newcomer to watch the shells knocking Martinpuich into a heap of bricks, only about 150 - 200 yards away. Though not so amusing when the bricks began to fall around one. Hun used a lot of shrapnel against us - dirty stuff! We often picked up bits which fell all around us, but had to let them go at once - they were so hot. At night one of our tanks just on our right flank took fire. It blazed away for a long time while the Hun amused himself flinging shells at it.

We had a very lively three days of it. One old rascal (Old Stevie) showed me some eight or nine watches which he had 'souvenired'. We used for line Headquarters an old dug-out in the near end of Martinpuich with eight entrances - five of which were blown in by shellfire, one actually while I was inside.

17th. Relieved by Seaforths on night of 17th, and went back to trenches just to West of Contalmaison, near the Chateau. I spent about half an hour looking for the Chateau, but could not find it, though I could see for miles in every direction. I believe the foundations exist in parts! Took a tremendous feed when we got back, and then slept with the rats (my companions for the next 2 - 3 years). Rain came down and soaked us through in our shelters.

18th. Sept. Relieved by the Durhams. Then walked to Melincourt. It rained the whole time. I believe I slept on the march! Not a man of my platoon fell out, though they must have been on their last legs. Had No. 6 Platoon of 'B' Coy. (Capt. A.G.Cameron).

BAISIEUZ

19th. On the march again to Baisieuz. My servant Milligan calls it "Bazooks". Found we were to camp on a mud field. Waited three hours until the tents came. Just like the Army!

20th. Sept. Roll Call. About ten officers and 360 other ranks from the battalion 'absent'! That's War!

[RLM: Divisional History showed 7 Officers killed and 6 wounded 15th. - 19th. September, and of the men, 45 killed, 245 wounded and 30 missing in the whole of September, i.e. Battalion Casualties.]

21st. Found out that there was a bigger population of beetles, wasps and mice in my tent than I had ever seen in any place in England.

RESTING (IN THE MUD)

An easy life now. Men recuperating after the show. Weather the limit! Men complimented by G.O.C. Division and Brigade. Am in a splendid battalion. Officers and men grand. "Hard drinkers and hard fighters", as Phillip Gibbs described them after his Christmas dinner with them in 1915.

24th. Sept. Joint Church Parade with the Camerons. Padre's words mixed up with the boom of a gun or with the screech of a motor bike doing 50 miles per hour.

26th. Sept. Range work. Met the Brigadier. Tried to 'bluff' him twice and succeeded once - not bad for a 'greenhorn'. Out riding at night. Alarm at night for lord knows what.

Life fairly uneventful. Usual 'rags' at night with the officers. Came off fairly well. Artillery fire seemed to liven up from day to day. The Hun must be getting it 'in the neck'. We are now supposed to go up for a short 'stunt' again next week, and preparations are being made for it.

UP TO LINE AGAIN

October 4th. Camp flooded - gratuitous bath! Move to Bresle, the Durhams again taking over from us. Told to act as Signalling Officer by the C.O. Told him I knew very little about the game.

5th. Oct. A month since I landed in this place and big changes have taken place already. McCallum joins 'B' Coy. Captain C--- just back from Paris - and he looks it.
6th. Doing signals. Find the sergeant is a bit lazy. Wakening him up a little.

7th. Reveille 5 a.m. Eugh! Rain, mud, confusion - march to Bresle, Albert, Becourt ("X 27"), halted for a couple of hours, once again. (Damn these lorries which cover us all over with mud!) On to Martinpuich. Shell holes and shells. Only a few casualties.

8th. Lovely morning. In afternoon 'A' Coy. (in Martin Alley Trench) were shelled. The Hun threw 402 5.9"s at the trench. Only two killed and a half dozen wounded. Heard Ian Morrison had been killed on the 15th. just about an hour after I left him.

ATTACK OF 9TH DIVISION OPPOSITE EAUCOURT L'ABBAYE

11th. Oct. Detailed to watch bombardment of ours over the front of the 9th. Scottish Division, on our right, preparatory to their attack. Found out where their (the Huns') retaliation fell, and reported. Glorious view. C.O. quite pleased. It was very funny to watch the sky-line go up in bits and then disappear in the smoke. S.R.Wilson killed in this attack.

12th. Oct. Gas shell attack 5 to 6 a.m. Made me wild. Don't want to take prisoners after this. Some bad casualties owing to gas.

13th. When the the 13th. of the month falls on a Friday, BEWARE! A shell came into our dug-out bursting through the roof, shattered the mirror near where it had entered (worst of all), dirtied a few people, and wounded the Adjutant and one or two others. I was out at the time, looking at the line with the C.O. So I had to carry on as substitute adjutant until Tobermory Maclean came up and took over as Adjutant. We relieved the Royal Scots in the front line. Got to sleep at 3 a.m. and rose at 7 a.m.

14th. Round the line. Filthy sights around Le Sars where our artillery must have given the Hun a little anxiety. Got chased by pip-squeaks along with W.C.Smith. Livens one up a little and keeps one fit! Relieved at night by H.L.I. Tiring tramp back to Shelter Wood. Of course, no sooner had we sat down to our midnight meal than the Hun, with his usual sense of humour, began shelling us. No damage done. More shelling about 5 a.m. Our tent covered with muck, while one or two other tents got holes in them. Nothing worse, fortunately.

Sunday 15th. Had a bath.

16th, 17th, and so on till the end - MUD, MUD, MUD!

18th. Our 'rest' is now finished - when did it begin? Left Lozenge Wood, for Martinpuich.

19th. Rotten ration party to take up to the Royal Scots. Bed 3 a.m. Half a bed is better than no bed at all!

20th. Round the companies. The C.O. (MacNeil of Oban) got a mouldy haggis, which he ate all by himself. It came in a parcel labelled "CAKE". He had kept it for three weeks!

21st. Canadians on our left attack the "Quadrilateral" and village of Pys. Partial success. Bombardment all night.

Back to Martinpuich from the line. Frost came on us suddenly and played the mischief with the mens' feet. Had to send a number to hospital.

24th. Oct. Relieved by 7/8th. K.O.S.B. Back to Lozenge Wood. Roads heavy on way back. Got stuck in the mud.

30th. Oct. Still at Bécourt, "X 27" district, as bleak and as barren a place as the Western Hebrides. [RLM: I first visited the Hebrides about 1967!] It is said that grass once grew here!

31st. Front line again.

NOVEMBER 1916

2nd. November. Chased by snipers. Relieved by 5th. Bn. Gloucesters, of 48th. Division.

3rd. Left Bécourt Dell for Albert and a bath.

4th. Albert is knocked about in the most up-to-date fashion, in accordance with the most advanced ideas. There is not a pane of unbroken glass in the place. Every house, if not entirely demolished or with a gable or two missing, has a few holes in the roof, which help the ventilation and also assist materially in the disposal of surplus rain. Ye Gods! It is a funny life!

Albert Cathedral has been very badly smashed but the tower still remains with the figure of the Virgin and Child held out at right angles to it at the top and threatening to fall at any moment on the heads of countless people who pass below. It is commonly said that the War will not end until the Virgin falls. As the French don't want it to fall (preferring to keep it as a monument of the Huns' occupation of the place), what can we do?

[Fortunately in the 1918 German Offensive, the Hun recaptured Albert and so gave our gunners the chance to knock the thing down by mistake! That's how the War ended!]

NOT IN THE LINE

5th. Nov. Billeting ahead for the Battalion in the delightful place known as Baisieux. Things went well. Back to 'B' Coy. and No. 6 Platoon as the proper signalling officer has now returned.

8th. Nov. Got 16 letters and papers in 24 hours - the accumulation of several days post. Must say we do appreciate cheery letters out here!

BEHIND ALBERT. MEET GOUGH, G.O.C. 5TH ARMY

9th. Billeting again at La Houssaye. Had a row with the Brigade Major. We were both right, only our adjutant had given me wrong instructions and I was only doing my duty by obeying them.

12th. Rugger against A.S.C. Humdrum life. Snow fell occasionally.

18th. To Amiens with Heyworth. Aired my French and emptied my pockets. Motored back.

25th. Nov. Billeting for Battalion in Contay.

26th. Moved to Contay. After dark, when having my dinner, I was told that somebody outside wanted to see me. Said something, and went out. Found a little officer and another bigger one, who wanted to see Colonel MacNeil. I said something like "Come along, old boy, up this way!" and raced the little fellow up one of those filthy little streets to the C.O.'s billet. Found it was General Gough, G.O.C. 5th. Army and Gen. Malcolm, his M.G.G.S. Gee! He was out of breath and could scarcely speak to the C.O. when they met!

MAMETZ - AND SNOW

29th. Felt rotten. Had a cold - owing to being billeted in a house!

30th. March to Mametz Wood. Took about 3 hours. Tents on a white hillside.

1st. December. We are to make roads for the next few days. Out occasionally on work parties. Those officers not on duty all stayed in bed (valises!) and so did the men. We ate, slept, read in our valises. It was so cold outside. We had no fires, absolutely nothing, yet I really believed we enjoyed ourselves. There was practically no shelling.

Found two Russian guns in Mametz Wood. Their date was 1882. They had been used by the Russians early in the war and then been captured by the Hun, taken across Germany, and then used to stay our Somme Offensive. Judging from their appearance they'll never be used again, unless for the scrap heap!

7th. Waited two hours for a train to take us the 4 mile journey to Meaulte. This is absolute truth! Billets in Albert.

10th. Dec. Amiens with MacCallum.

11th. Inoculation. Felt that the end of the world was coming. Out riding to Scots Redoubt with Fyfe. Had a beastly pony - stumbling at every step. When we got into Contalmaison our guns began to go off all around us, then a few German shells came in and the poor old pony 'got off its mark'. Found myself faced with the problem of how to go over the horse's head decently without injuring my inoculated arm. Fortunately managed to stop the brute in time.

14th. Out, officially this time, to take over at Scots Redoubt.

15th. Took over for the Battalion from 12th. H.L.I. in Martinpuich. Found them in a bad mess, having arrived in darkness the previous night, and their men were all over the countryside! Got a working arrangement and saw our battalion in safety - except D.T.M. who, of course, lost his way. Our dug-out flooded, but I managed to find a dry part of the floor. Men's shelters very bad.

Sunday 17th. Left in a hurry for the Front Line. Relieved 6/7th. R.S.F. at 6 p.m. Our line of defence here is not continuous - consists of piquets, posts, and sentries. Had rather a difficult corner to hold. The shell hole occupied by some of my platoon, and just about 10 yards from my H.Q. having been raided and bombed that very morning. Got extra Lewis Gun for the post. Work party digging a new piquet line. Had to do every damn thing myself as my platoon sergeant was hopeless. Had a very busy couple of days.

19th. Relieved by 8/10th. Gordons. Back to Scots Redoubt - a long, long trail. Thank goodness there is a soup kitchen halfway.

20th. to 22nd. Cleaning up.

23rd/24th. Fatigue Party, hard driving work, Pioneer Camp.

25th. Dec. This is Christmas Day by the way! Left at 4 p.m. with 60 - 70 men to carry trench boards from Martinpuich to the front end of Le Sars. Men did well, however, and I did not have very much trouble. Battalion up in Front Line again. 'B' Coy. in dugouts behind Eaucourt L'Abbaye. Had to remain below all day because our movements could be spotted by the Hun, who had two or three guns always trained on the dugout doors, which he was always smashing. Shelling very severe and accurate in this part of the line.

STILL MUCKING AROUND

26th. Carrying party at night.

27th. Relieved by 13th. Royal Scots who had an officer and two or three men killed on the road up. Back to Prue Trench and Seven Elms at night. Awful place. Freezing cold.

28th. Dawn did not improve matters much.

29th. Dec. Front Line again. What an affection it has for us! Heavy journey with two days rations. The going was so hard it took an hour for the party to move 3/4 of a mile. None of my men fell out, but I've had more trouble with the sergeant. He'll go at the first opportunity! Mud a tremendous hindrance. It prevented large patrols going out. Hun did not seem to worry. He was content to sit in his trench and 'poop off' Verey Lights.

Farquharson and I were nearly shot by one of our own Lewis Gun men while taking a walk in "No Man's Land". (We had gone out without warning ALL our front line men. By chance the gunner got a glimpse of my bare knees and kilt, and recognized we were not Huns).

The Butte of Warlencourt looked very strange at nights under the glare of Verey Lights. It is shaped just like a coal bin, only it is white in colour from the chalk. The 8/10th. Gordons raided it a few nights later and killed about 80 Huns.

30th. Dec. Longest day in my life so far. Could not move about. All the trenches had fallen in, and our men just lay about in shell holes. The Hun treated us to aerial darts and grenades and we had a few casualties, chiefly in my platoon.

31st. Dec. Repetition of the 30th., only we had the additional trouble of some short shooting on the part of our own gunners. Relieved at night. Got back to Scots Redoubt at 11.30 having carried some 400 rounds of machine gun ammunition in addition to a few other things. Went round with the rum and whisky to my platoon, and so we brought in the New Year. Later on some of the people in the hut began mixing their drinks. We had a terrific meal also. I had about four huge parcels from home containing everything from soap to St. Ivel cheese and Scotch Haggis!

1917

1st. January. Wrote a few letters and got into bed at 3 a.m. Slept like a top, as we had had very little sleep during the past few days. Wakened along with the rest of the officers at 10 a.m. by the C.O. Think some of us must have fallen asleep again for he returned at 11 a.m. and found half still in bed. I was out of bed but was garbed like Venus at the well when he reappeared. Devil of a strafe over this. A new major has rolled up - he does look new - to the War!

2nd. Jan. Major A--- died - had too little to do. (Suicide).

3rd. Jan. Signalling again. Away up 26th. Avenue (a trench) taking over from 10/11th. H.L.I. Tried to get some souvenirs out of an old tank used last September - nothing doing - the whole business blown to bits.

4th. Jan. In charge of advance party for the relief. Trouble with the cooks, who, of course, had to get lost. Caused me a lot of walking. Shelled a bit. One landed 2 - 3 yards in front of me but it was a dud, and I was well down anyway, even although it was in the open.

I MEET THE ARTILLERY

5th. Jan. Detailed by the C.O. to go out shooting with a 6" Howitzer officer who was to meet me in Martinpuich (i.e. about 1 1/2 miles behind the lines and about 1/2 to 3/4 mile behind our battalion H.Q.). Apparently Farquharson, my O.C. Coy., had reported the short shooting by 6 inch howitzers of ours on 31st. Dec. The gunners of course denied it. As some of their shells had been falling all day all around my platoon I rather backed up Farquharson. Unfortunately he gave my name as a witness and the whole business went to Corps. H.Q. Looked as if I had been complaining, tho' I know that our gunners must necessarily 'put the wind up' us at times.

Anyway, Mr. 6 inch How. said he would take me to his Observation Post "which was very far forward in a dangerous place", and he would repeat his 'shoot' of 31st. Dec. The beggar took me to a spot not many yards from our battalion H.Q.!

He fired off some 50 - 60 rounds at £3:10:0 per round for my edification, taking two hours to do it. Then I told him I was bored, fed-up, hungry, and was buzzing off. As I left him I heard him shouting down the telephone to his battery. "Infantry Officer fed up and hungry and has left me. Stop shoot". Never heard of him again.

LE SARS

5th. Jan. Round the line at night. Some of the Huns' dead still unburied (killed in October!). We had not had time to look after them.

6th. Back to Acid Drop Camp about midnight.

8th. Jan. Front Line again. Glorious night. Laying out lines as usual - 1 a.m. Away out by Chalk Pit. Snowed like Billy-Oh. Lucky to get back by 3 a.m. Got tucked away in a number of sandbags for the night.

10th. In charge of guides for relief by 6th. Camerons. Things went well. Reached Villa Camp by 10 p.m. and got settled down by 12.

11th. Jan. Had a bath in Albert, an event always worth chronicling.

12th. Shifted to Scots Redoubt South.

16th. Jan. To Pioneer Camp. 6 inches of snow on the ground. Ugh!

18th. Into line again. Ground heavy with snow. Atmosphere thick with haze. Strange quietness all around. It was odd to walk for mile after mile along a staked path or on duckboards in the snow. Shell holes all covered up, so we often went in up to the knees. Held up fairly often. Shelled outside Bn. H.Q. and had four or five beside me wounded, not very seriously.

19th. Round the line with the C.O. who 'strafed' everybody. Got down for a sleep about 6.30 a.m. Fairly busy afternoon. Out at night. C.O. Still strafing. Got back at midnight. "C.O." here does not refer to Colonel MacNeil (of blessed memory - he was probably on leave at this time), but to "Conscientious Obstructor", Major H.A.Duncan, temporarily i/c.

Three of a Lewis gun team killed, including McShee who was a master at my school, Hillhead High School, and some wounded. They were in an advanced post at the time. Short shooting as cause. I suppose difficult to avoid, but most embarrassing to infantry who have enough to do to keep out of the road of Hun stuff.

20th. Back to support trenches at Seven Elms - a bleak feature-less desert. Nothing but snow everywhere. The C.O. was lost for 2 hours on the way back - he had only 700 yards to go but took all that time. Battalion fearfully pleased when they heard about it. Heard afterwards that C.O. had visited Eaucourt L'Abbaye and Martinpuich in his wanderings. Lovely!

21st. Trouble with old F. but got things squared up before C.O. came home. Good thing for F. Conference re. raid.

22nd. Line again.

23rd. Hunnybun on patrol had a man knocked out. Very hard time. The C.O. told me he wanted me to act as adjutant while Maclean was on leave. Told him I didn't want to as I was too junior in the Battalion. He wasn't very pleased.

DIVISION RELIEVED

24th. The Black Watch relieved us. They had some 16 casualties. We were very lucky.

25th. Bath.

27th. Working party - these are the banes of an infantry officer's existence.

28th. Line again. What an affection we have for it!

29th. Good dose of trench mortars and whizz-bangs while going round the line.

30th. Jan. Milligan, my servant, off to hospital with fever. 8/10th. Gordons raided the Butte of Warlencourt. They passed me by, clothed in white shirts and nighties, white helmets, and rifles part white bandaged, in the snowy night. They didn't bring back a prisoner. Put a terrific wind up the Hun. Splendid show! [They brought back twelve prisoners, as per War history. RLM]

1st. February 1917. At Acid Drop Camp.

2nd. Sent to take over camp at Fricourt from 26th. Battalion Australians. Arrived there about 7 a.m. Found them all packing up. When their C.O. found there was a Scotty in the camp he sent for me and before I could state my business placed a glass and some 'ammunition' in front of me. He was quite surprised when I told him I never drank before 7.30 in the morning. He told our C.O., so the Battalion had a laugh at me!

OFF TO PARIS

4th. Did billeting in Franvillers. Very cold cycling. Roads were the last word for all that is bad. It began freezing at this time, and for two weeks there was not a moment's thaw - even at midday the frost held. The men could scarcely hold their rifles for drill - of course, the Staff considered that the War would not be won without drill! Remained in Franvillers till 18th. Had great ride with Jimmy Orr one day on a couple of fresh horses. Fine omelettes ^ la francaise in Corbie. Alan White and I granted Paris leave. Got a lot of good-humoured advice from those who had been there before.

The C.O. told me what to see - the Louvre, Napoleon's Tomb, etc., etc. but we did not see any of these places. Buzzed off to Amiens. Dined in style at the Gobert Hotel. Soup, omelette, fresh fish (the first I had tasted for 6 months), duck, soufflé, chocolate, fruit, etc. All for 11/-.

AMIENS

Spent night at Belfort Hotel. We were unfortunately given rooms on the very top storey, and only 100 yards from the station. Of course, the Hun came over to bomb the station. As we knew how often his shells and bombs fell just 100 yards short of their objective we were almost frightened. However, we turned over on the other side, resolved to die like gentlemen - in bed!

14th. February, 1917. Up at 5.40. Train late by 1 hour, owing to air-raid, so that wasn't bad. Paris 12.45. Bolted in a bee line for the station restaurant, and remained there till they had produced the finest lunch of the week. Embarrassed temporarily after lunch by the many gratuitous offers of guides, official and otherwise. Soon learned how to deal with the whole beastly crew, and showed them we were not as green as our kilts indicated. I object to guides of any sort.

Our first move was to the Banque de France where we got about 250 francs each. I think we caused some amusement there.

PARIS

Got into the Continental Hotel, the finest in Paris - this after the C.O.'s advice as to hotels. He had given us an address where we could get bed and breakfast for half a crown, or something. Guess a waiter in the Continental would hand back half a crown if he got it as a tip! We got a bedroom fit for a King. Tea at Maxime's - disappointed with it. Of course, that's not the fashionable hour! Reported to Maurice Brett, the novelist (A.P.M. at Paris) - rather a well-known character. Dinner at the Continental. We had some Melba peaches at 2/3 each! Rationing is beginning in Paris tomorrow. Why could they not put it off for three days!

14th. Bed fairly early.

15th. Breakfast in bed! If I ever get back from this war I'm going to have breakfast in bed every day of my life. I'll have coffee and rolls to it. Notre Dame, Hotel de Ville. Lovely streets and buildings. Lunch at Ciro's. Omelettes were most expensive there. We had two each. Perhaps that was why. Our uniforms saved us from dressing for all these places. Rumplemayers for tea. Very nice. Tremendous number of monde and demi-monde there!

Think a great deal of the style and dress and of the looks of the Parisiennes, but that's all. They don't compare with the Rue de la Sauchie. Felt myself becoming quite Frenchified. Alan does not know French, so I get plenty of practice. Visited the Banque de France again just in case it would be necessary. Opera House at night. Romeo and Juliet. Magnificent show. Wonderful acting. Glorious singing.

16th. Taxied round the Bois de Boulogne. Full speed along the Champs Elysees. All out round the Avenues in the Park. Had the hood of our car down. These Parisians who hate the cold must have thought us mad. We didn't have coats either. Back by Quai d'Orsay. Thought of old Monte Cristo.

The place is full of Americans just now - all rushing out of Germany. We are scarcely in it. Uncle Sam is running the show, and is far more popular. Wait till he sees how nice the war is!

Olympia at night. Found some Gordons from the 15th. Division. They had apparently been drinking success to the Division! We were the only Highlanders in the place. Nearly mobbed but got out with all our party. Some night! Bed fairly early, as we had to leave next day.

BACK TO THE FOLD

17th. Left with 1.15 train. Four English nurses in the compartment. Got into an argument with them about Scott's poetry. Proved to them that Scott was a greater man than Shakespeare!!! Amiens again. Belfort.

18th. On to Frevent. Division has shifted from the Somme (high time too!). Expect offensive in the North. Lorry via St. Pol to Roellecourt. Lunch, and then walked to Maisnil-St-Pol. where I found the Battalion. Maisnil lies behind Arras and Vimy.

19th. Old job again and here endeth this chapter!

Arras (1) 1917

FEBRUARY 1917

The 15th. Scottish Division had been on the Somme for about six months. Their tour of duty began in the full heat of summer and with a bad spell of most cruel fighting, particularly around High Wood. Then on 15th. Sept., with the help of tanks, they took Martinpuich, but suffered pretty heavily. The remainder of the winter was fairly quiet as far as fighting was concerned. The weather was our worst enemy. Mud and snow and rain were always present. In spite of that, the men were very healthy. We seldom got very far from the line, and when in the line or near it amusements were few. Now and then a stray concert party blew up. Leave went slow for officers and particularly for men. Life was very hard but not too dangerous. We made plenty of fun amongst ourselves, and many a wild night was spent in the old tents or huts well within range of the Boche 'cottar gun', a 4.2" high velocity. Some of us managed Paris leave, a few being benefited by the change, and a few being not much better off. Altogether in spite of mud and a certain amount of sickness things were not too bad. They could be a thousand times worse - as we were soon to see.

MAISNIL ST. POL

20th. Feb. Hood went sick yesterday, so I became A/Adjt. Kept the job until 4th. March when Tobermory Maclean returned. Had very busy and interesting time. Maisnil-St-Pol became famous in our time for the "Town-Major Incident", when the C.O. (Duncan) woke up one morning to find the bed next to his covered with big boot marks and thick with mud. Never saw any man so wild!

The C.O. however did one good thing in this village. A man died, and instead of sending the body with a firing party a distance of 20 miles to the nearest British Cemetery - in rain and snow - he buried the fellow in the village cemetery - thus saving much trouble and a rotten tramp for some dozen poor beggars who would have had to 'hoof it'. The correspondence with the Staff over this apparently irregular action occupied ten volumes. No fewer than 6,000 questions were asked and answered - by the poor A/Adjt.!!! So much for the Staff running the War! (Yes, I know what you are thinking, 1972 RLM).

24th. Feb. Battalion moved to Noyellette, of which place Sorley became Town Major. At this place the C.O. designated H.Q. Mess as little better than a third rate bar, raising his nose as he sniffed. It was his fault. He drove even the poor Padre to drink! I found the life very interesting. Work began about 8 a.m. and continued until about midnight for me. Battalion was engaged on daily work parties.

THE 10TH ARGYLLS

3rd. of March. Moved up to Arras by road. Just near the "Y" huts at the cross roads our battalion halted for ten minutes, as usual, on the journey up. One of the men came to me and said that the 10th. Argylls were just a quarter of a mile away. I set off at a gallop for the place, found a drummer boy of the 10th. and told him to go at once into his officers' mess and get out everybody from the Colonel downwards, for the 11th. Argylls would pass in a few minutes.

He did his work thoroughly! When the C.O. gave the order for our fellows to fall in and march off, we began to find hundreds of fellows, all Argylls, coming in the opposite direction. Soon the battalion had to stop - and brother met brother! Our fours suddenly became eights, and shouting was heard everywhere - in the richest Glasgow accents. All the 10th. seemed to shake hands with all the 11th! They brought out their pipe band and played us along the road. I saw dozens of people I knew. The whole road was blocked by the composite 10th/11th. Argylls.

Our C.O.'s face was a study. He couldn't speak. Fortunately he never discovered who brought the 10th. Argylls along. I believe he had his suspicions however. He was in the very devil of a mood that night, so we just left him to look after his own affairs, while we had a good dinner in a hotel in Arras.

WAR DE LUXE IN FRONT OF ARRAS

This hotel, Hotel de L'Universe, was situated near the station and only about 25 minutes walk from the front line. It was staffed by French people and remained open throughout the whole Arras Offensive until the German Offensive of 1918 when it closed down temporarily. There were quite a number of French people in Arras during the whole course of the war, a factor which could not but have helped the enemy espionage system. We got some quite good dinners out of this hotel. On this particular night we had a specially good meal, paying for it, but the C.O. would not participate. He sat aside and watched us!

3rd. March 1917. The battalion moved into the line at dawn - a daylight relief, a most welcome change from the Somme where, owing to the lack of trenches, every movement in the open had to be carried out after dark.

Our H.Q. was a little house only 750 yards from the front line - just out of range of the Boche trench mortars. Of course, the place was not infrequently strafed by guns. In this house we ate, slept and worked. The H.Q. men lived in the cellar below, where they were comparatively safe. We had two pianos - and the signallers made good use of them. People at the end of the phone in the front line could hear the music at Battalion H.Q.!

We had a splendid trench system in front of Arras, and could move about easily during the day.

The Hun was fairly active with trench mortars and machine guns, but we had little to complain about. At one point our line was only 25 yards from the Hun trenches. The men had plenty of dugouts or cellars and were fairly well off. The front line ran through a street, and among the ruins of houses and factories.

ARRAS BEFORE THE OFFENSIVE

5th. Maclean came back and I reverted to looking after signals. Life became cheerier, preparations for our offensive proceeded apace, dumps were formed forward, extra trenches dug, stores formed, new lines laid. All the time units were shortening their frontages and Arras becoming more crowded. Every odd corner and cellar was occupied. During daytime it looked like a city of the dead - all our men were hidden on account of Boche aeroplanes - but at night they came out of their holes and burrows and the streets became like Gallowgate on a Saturday night.

7th. March 1917. Bn. relieved and on 10th. we moved back to Noyelle again. Succeeded in getting back to my company tho' asked to become assistant adjutant. Liked the company life better.

11th. to 18th. Training all day long. Managed to get away occasionally for a ride to Habarcq, Arras or Hyesnes-le-Comte. German withdrawal from Somme Front. Very bucked with the news. Loupart Wood, Butte de Warlencourt etc. all taken. We had sat in the mud looking at these places in winter.

MAIZIERES

19th. Billeted at Maizieres. Good billets. Only person displeased was the Padre - and he was suitably 'told off'.

20th. Colonel MacNeil due back. Thank Goodness! Orders out for the show. Things look promising and men are in good trim. 'A' and 'B' coys will probably have the hardest time. 'C' and 'D' go over first, and then 'A' and 'B' go through to take the Railway Embankment - a mile beyond. Only four officers per company to go over, so expect to be one. Felt very keen.

21st. Practising over dummy trenches for the show. The Colonel, MacNeil, back - what a relief! A difference in the Battalion already.

21 - 24th. Training daily on ground about 4 or 5 miles away. Weather very cold, snow and sleet. Toppingly fit. Told I was to be left behind at Duisans on the first day. Went to see the adjutant about it, but he chased me. Two brand new captains have rolled up. Discovered that I have £40 in the bank. Will just about do for leave - when it comes.

ARRAS

24th. March. Out from 7.45 a.m. till 4 p.m. without a meal. Jove! We tucked in when the parade was over. This training is a trifle overdone.

28th. Rode over to Avesnes. Looked up Tom Martin of Hillhead School. Tea in Officers Club, followed by more tea somewhere else. Saw Sir Douglas Haig and Staff. Bought fish. Devil of a job to get it back as the bag burst in the middle of a gallop. My clothes smelt of fish for days after. Dined with 'A' Coy. Tremendous night.

29th. To Averdoingt with Alan Whyte. Called on MacCallum. Tea with him in a cafe where he knew the people.

31st. Cycled to Arras. Shelled on the road by a naval gun when I was about 4 - 5 miles behind the line. One shell fell just a few yards behind me at the side of the road. Working until midnight, but got the battalion billeted O.K.

1st. April. Splendid row with the Town Major. Showed him the error of his ways - fortunately he was only a Lieutenant.

2nd. Work party - the first of a rotten series up round the front line. Got shelled a bit as we were working alongside one of our batteries. No casualties, fortunately.

DUISANS

3rd. March. Took a walk through the sewers where the battalion is to stay during the final bombardment. Cold as hades, but lit with electric light which I don't think they need in Hades. Had to leave late at night for Duisans. Came out by the Scarpe Canal. Soaked through with rain. Argument with 8/10 Gordons who wanted to take the hut we were in. (It was really the Gordons' hut).

Am down as Reserve Signalling Officer. Felt very sorry to leave the men, but feel sure it won't be for long, for I'll be up soon.

7th. Heavy bombardment. Thank goodness I'm not a Hun.

8th. The Day Before!

9th. THE Day! Good news came first - then bad news. Didn't hear our bombardment at 5 a.m. owing to the wind blowing in the wrong direction, and to the fact that I was asleep. Went into Duisans, and learned that we had the front system everywhere, but that our brigade (45th.) were held up by the Railway Embankment, which is some 60 feet high. That meant that 'A' and 'B' companies were held up. Heard they were to try again at 12.15 p.m.

Saw about 1300 prisoners - poor specimens, particularly the officers. Couldn't rest all day, but looking for news. Thousands of cavalry passing through Duisans all day. Heard that the "Blue Line" was taken at 3 p.m. and then the "Brown Line" in parts. At 5 p.m. all objectives of Division gained, and 37th. Division going through towards Monchy - the pivot of Vimy Ridge. Felt bucked but feared the casualties. All divisions, the 9th, 15th, 51st, 3rd, and 12th. - all have done beautifully. Far better than the Somme show. Poor Alan Whyte killed. Shankland and Eric Duncan wounded. Jock Stewart seriously wounded but still able to swear, which he did all the way down to the Casualty Clearing Station. Hunnybun got shell-shock. Went into my valise at 7 p.m. with indigestion.

ARRAS

Wakened about 9 p.m. by Southey who came into the tent to say that A.G.Cameron, Baillie, Muirhead and myself had to go up the line. Was dressed in no time, as I had everything ready. Rotten night. Snowing heavily. Left Milligan behind with my valise and instructions to come up next day.

Got onto main Arras Road. Devil a bus in sight. Tremendous number of limbers and transport at roadside - blocked - waiting to get forward. Very dark.

Ultimately managed a car and got to Arras Railway Station comfortably. No shells falling in Arras, which looked darker and more dismal than ever. Lots of cavalry moving through. Left car, and with Muirhead and Baillie, who was up for the first time, went down the old Douai Road. Hun very quiet. Passed along via our old Bn. and Coy. H.Q., the latter now a mass of ruins where some 20 houses were blown off the map by the explosion of a trench mortar dump. Big crater formed - a tomb for some 30 men. Took Muirhead and Baillie up to old front line which I knew well, and sat down for a breather in O.G.1. (Old German Line 1). Wire beautifully knocked about. Moon coming up. Struck across country, followed along by the Railway and by Fred's Wood to the embankment which was easy to find as it was just about a mile away. German trenches in terrible mess - quite unrecognisable. Remarkably clean battlefield - I only saw one dead Hun. The railway embankment was well marked by our shells.

ARRAS

Tuesday 12.30 a.m. Found the Bn. H.Q. all asleep except for the signaller on duty. Heard of Forrest's death, one of the best of my signallers. Stirton had been distinguishing himself, and had accounted for several snipers in the Wood of Blangy who were responsible for Forrest's death.

What had happened was as follows:- 'C' and 'D' Coys left under cover of the barrage in grand style. They took Fred's Wood quickly, but they did not do any mopping up, i.e. they left a number of unwounded Huns behind them in their eagerness to get forward. 'A' and 'B' Coys. therefore got a tremendous amount of this work to do. They bombed dugouts, took prisoners, or didn't take them. A number of snipers were passed over in Blangy Wood, and it was some three hours before they were accounted for. They caused poor Whyte's death in addition to Forrest's and several others. They were finally disposed of by bombs, etc.

THE RAILWAY EMBANKMENT

'A' and 'B' Coys. then passed through 'C' and 'D' towards the Railway Triangle - the key to our part of the front. They were soon under heavy M.G. fire from Huns on the top of the embankment and from the concrete dugouts below. Our fellows had to keep low and get into the old Hun trenches. Here Stewart, Eric Duncan and several other officers were wounded. Capt. Mitchell patrolled on his own down to the embankment and actually climbed it, to find himself confronted at the top with several Boches. He of course got some information (!) and got back, lor' knows how. By this time we had a wire laid out to Fred's Wood (10 a.m.) and the artillery (whose fire was well over the embankment by this time) were persuaded to give it another dose. Our fellows then attacked again and took the embankment pushing out posts about half a mile in front. 'B' Coy. took a field gun on the top of the Embankment. Lord knows how the Hun got it up. The casualties in the company were 37, including 3 from my platoon.

The 9th. Scottish Division on our left, just north of the Scarpe, were held up by the continuation of the same embankment. Our chaps were able to fraternise with the 10th. Argylls on the north of the river.

We had among the officers, Morrison and Whyte killed, Shedden-Debbie mortally wounded and Stewart, Ferguson, Hunnybun, Weir and Duncan wounded.

THE ARRAS SHOW. 1917.

Tuesday 10th. April. Rejoined No. 7 platoon in the morning, just at daybreak. Mitchell and Miller only officers left in the company. Had a look around. Glorious view from top of the embankment. Bridge broken over Scarpe. The whole place was pounded and churned up with shell holes. The daylight showed the terrific strength of the embankment and how admirably it was suited for defence. The dugouts were large, strongly made but Hunnishly filthy.

In spite of orders quite a lot of spoil had been taken. Watches were as plentiful as Samuel's in Argyle Street, Glasgow. We got black bread, sausages and about 1000 bottles of topping soda water. No whisky however! Along with the soda water was the usual staff correspondence where the battalions were threatened with stoppage if the empty bottles were not returned. Just like the "Q" branch of our own staff.

Thank goodness I did not have to take up rations on the German side of 'No Man's Land'. It must have been terrible under our harassing night fire. I believe some of the prisoners we took had not received any food for three days, so effectively had our gunners worked. Every cross road, every cutting, was blown to blazes.

The 46th. Brigade passed through us in the afternoon, and with very few casualties had gone through Feuchy and had seized Orange Hill, and what was known as the Brown Line, before darkness fell.

From what I have gathered, the Boche was on the run here as he had never run before. He had not a big concentration of troops and if we had had our reserves marching up and through us (i.e. the 15th. Divn.) at the moment we had taken Orange Hill, we could have had Monchy that night - and so saved thousands of lives. But we delayed too long or else the attacking divisions, the 9th, 15th. and 51st. got through quicker than expected.

But when the 37th. Division passed through us, for various reasons, they only gained some few hundred yards. I fail entirely to explain this lack of progress and why they as a division were unable to accomplish on the 9th. and 10th. April (when it was easiest, owing to the Boche confusion, to get forward), what we as a Brigade had to accomplish, and did accomplish at terrific cost on the 11th, in a blinding snowstorm with the thermometer below zero, with no hot food, and in the face of the most terrible M.G. fire which I ever experienced in the whole course of the war.

Still 10th. April, 1917. Orders came for the Battalion to move forward to Feuchy Redoubt. I was sent forward with a runner to fix things up there - to get the lie of the land etc. On my way back again to rejoin the Bn. to take it up, I found that the original order was cancelled. The whole battalion was marching off. Just got time to find my pack and rejoin my platoon. Nobody except the C.O., Adjutant and Intelligence Officer knew where we were going. 1 p.m. [I found out afterwards that Colonel MacNeil was to take the battalion to a place which at the time the order was given would be half a mile or more inside the Boche Line!]

DRILL MOVEMENTS UNDER FIRE

We set off, all loaded up with ammunition, to support the 37th. Division who were supposed to have taken Monchy. It was the very devil of a rush - we were at ten minutes notice - no time for dinners - men tired - overloaded (we had not even in 1917 learned what was necessary and what unnecessary to carry in battle!). Went through Feuchy - column of platoons in file at 25 yards interval. 3/4 mile in front of Feuchy we began to come all of a sudden under long-range M.G. fire.

Then came a sight I shall never forget. As we moved forward we were becoming quite exposed to the enemy - and a platoon is a fairly large body, 16 platoons of course is much larger! In front was heard a whistle and the leading platoon deployed. When the second platoon came up to the same place it deployed on a signal exactly as though on parade - 4 paces interval on the right, and did it beautifully, continuing to move forward in short rushes. It was absolutely grand and only once in later days did I see anything to touch it. My own platoon repeated the movement as enthusiastically as the first. It was really almost funny lying there in the open with bullets swishing over one, some falling now to one side, now to another. We saw them spluttering up the ground beside us quite often.

MONCHY

Things got a wee bit hotter as we moved forward. The Colonel was lor' knows where (MacNeil), but certainly far in front. Except for the Intelligence Officer I bet there was not another officer in the Brigade nearer the Boche than old Colonel MacNeil. He didn't like shells, I'm sure, but he could play with them all the same. Everybody had nothing but praise for the way he led us on.

Darkness was now only about hour off, and we were up alongside a few of the 37th. Division, well on this side of Monchy. So we got in touch with their front line. The Colonel then resolved to dig in some 200 yards behind it, on the forward slopes of Orange Hill and under view of Monchy and Roeux. We had a bit of a job to get into position. The trouble was that there wasn't a damned bit of cover, except a row of broken telegraph poles, and that wouldn't do for a battalion.

There was no place suitable for reserves, and the only thing to do was to string us out in a single line and dig in. We had a few people knocked out in getting over to the digging-in place.

ARCTIC CONDITIONS

Where we first began to dig became Lancer Lane, a trench very familiar to us later on. The Bn. now became Brigade Reserve as the remainder of the Brigade moved to the right towards Monchy.

Fortunately the Hun artillery did not worry us much, but all night we were under constant M.G. fire - a grand incentive to digging-in! It snowed most of the night, and our feet soon converted the bottom of the trench into one long slushy puddle. The men were fearfully tired but awfully good. They were soaked literally through and through, their greatcoats had been left behind in Arras. We had no dugouts, of course.

JOHN WALKER SAVES MY LIFE

I was very lucky because before leaving Duisans I had emptied most of a bottle of Johnnie Walker into my water-bottle. That helped me considerably during the next few days, though I didn't get very much of it. McAinsh shared with me, for he was developing pneumonia, and was soon taken down the line.

At 4 a.m. Capt. Mitchell, who had been doing splendidly came along and said that the Brigade were to attack at 5 a.m. - going for Monchy, with, I think, the 29th. Division on our right. We got the men ready - there wasn't much to do. I never heard a murmur or a complaint, even though they had taken all their objectives and now had to take another Division's objectives. We were soon told that we had to be in reserve to the Brigade. Shortly after 4 a.m., forming-up began on our right, but we could scarcely see for the snow which, blowing in our faces from the East, more or less blinded us. At 5 a.m. the guns burst out (they had been going a little all night), and the other three battalions of the Brigade began to move forward - Scots Fusiliers in support, our lot co-operating with M.G. fire.

THE ATTACK ON MONCHY - UPHILL IN A SNOWSTORM

Dawn came about this time and it was remarkable to see the black blobs of men getting forward, down into Happy Valley and up the slopes towards the Orchard, north of Monchy. Their objective was the Pelves-Monchy Ridge. Our artillery barrage quickly died down to a futile series of noises - our heavy guns were out of range, having been unable to move because of mud. The Boche at the beginning did not use his guns much but he made up for that by the way he handled his machine guns. They were most effective and caused many casualties in the Brigade. He seemed to have thousands of them.

The walking wounded began to come back by 6 a.m. and they continued until nightfall. There is no use in describing their plight, or of emphasizing the hard luck of those unable to walk who had to lie for hours in the snow.

Then the rumours began. We could not make out whether Monchy had been taken or not. It got a hellish bombardment, certainly from our guns and from the Boche. The 6th. Camerons did get through it but had to fall back as both flanks were in the air. Certainly Monchy was not taken by 2 p.m. The Boche defended it like the Devil himself. He had pill boxes and M.G. emplacements everywhere. Our slowness on the 10th. had given him time to rally.

MONCHY - CAMERONS DO WELL

I have rarely had occasion to praise the 6th. Camerons in our Brigade (tho' we Argylls would never let an outsider say a word to us against them without getting on his top) but they can scarcely be too highly lauded, along with the Royal Scots, for their show on that day at Monchy. They had some 250 casualties in 3 days fighting, losing 6 officers killed and about 10 wounded. The stretcher-bearers had a hard time. They worked themselves off their feet.

The men now got some bully beef up. Milligan arrived with some whisky and chocolate, the latter went chiefly to the platoon. This was about 10 a.m. We had an officer and one or two men hit by shell and M.G. fire.

ROEUX

The scenery around us was very interesting and we studied it as we ate our bully beef. There was a terrific din all day about Monchy. The hill on which it stood was just a mass of dust, flying bricks and shells exploding, all enveloped in a huge column of smoke. I wish old Dante could have seen it. It was a better example of an inferno than he had conceived.

In front we had Roeux, where the 51st. Scottish Division were to attack a month later. The Chemical works there stood out conspicuously. There was a Red Cross Flag hanging from one of its windows. At night the whole place went on fire. I wished we had been a bit nearer - we could have got warmed up a little!

At one period of the day, I think it was late in the afternoon, the cavalry came up behind us, at a gallop. They got up almost to our trench, but the Boche gave them (and us) such a hot time of it that the poor fellows had to turn and gallop back. This was the only time I saw cavalry in battle. On our part of the line, it was a failure, because of lack of surprise, M.G. fire, and the nature of the ground. On our right they did better, but had severe losses, and their leader, General Buckley Johnson was killed, but I don't think they had been sent up early enough. The slaughter of men and horses, right from the Scarpe Canal to Guémappe (on the South) was appalling.

FAMPOUX - ROEUX. APRIL 1917. ATTACK ON OUR LEFT

On the morning of the 11th. I watched, from the high ground where we were, an attack along the Scarpe on Roeux and Greenland Hill by the 3rd. Division. This was the finest sight of the whole war from the spectacular point of view, except for a fortnight later.

Roeux first went up in a cloud of smoke, apparently, and then from the ground in front our fellows sprang up everywhere, and moved towards their objectives. I got many lessons from watching that attack, particularly in judging the 'lie' of Boche barrage, and his methods of fire. The cavalry were supporting the attack behind Fampoux, but so many 8 inch shells were thrown at them that they could do nothing. The attack was a "limited success" in the view of the spectators. Probably "a brilliant success" in the home newspapers. Don't know what it cost the 3rd. Division but I'm glad I wasn't there.

It snowed heavily till midnight when a thaw set in. This rapidly connected the pools in the trenches until we had a sort of canal running the whole length of the place. We expected relief before midnight, and were fortunately relieved at 4 a.m. Very cold wind, but it helped to blow us home, i.e. back to Arras. Mud feet deep on the roads. I got to Arras about 7 a.m. on the 12th. having had charge of the stragglers. Devil of a job to cover the last mile as we were all loaded with Lewis Gun ammunition. We were accommodated in trenches round Blangy - they were, probably, better than those we had vacated at Monchy!

Got some hard-boiled eggs from Harragin, who was very kind. Company shifted to the sewers where even temperatures were guaranteed - a temp. about freezing point! Got my men shifted to cellars, found a billet, had something to eat, washed my knees, crawled into my valise about 11 p.m. and slept without turning until 8 a.m. on the 13th. when I woke up.

Rose at 1 p.m. when I was strafed by the C.O. for being late - one of the humours of the army is the thing one gets strafed for, and one of the tragedies is the things one doesn't get strafed for. Took indents. Farquharson, Heyworth, Beattie to dinner.

So ended Part One of the Arras show of April, 1917.

I forgot to mention that on the 11th. I saw one Hun plane bring down five of our slow, heavy, artillery observation planes, one after another. Our fellows were very game to stick to their work as they did, practically without protection, absolutely at the mercy of any fast Hun machine.

A SLIGHT GROUSE

The papers had a lot to say about the show, and a tremendous amount of praise was awarded to the Canadians for taking Vimy Ridge. It seemed to me that they got too much praise, and that some more should have gone, not only to the other people who helped to take the Ridge, but also to ourselves and to the 9th. Division. The key to the Ridge was Monchy which dominated the whole of the Scarpe Valley. This had to be taken and held before any attack on the Ridge could hope for success. The entrance to this valley was, for us, blocked by the Railway Triangle and Embankment, defensive works of the highest importance. The 9th. Scottish and 15th. Divisions of course had to take this embankment which was from 40 to 60 or 70 feet high in places, a most tremendous obstacle. Then as soon as we got into the valley stuff of all kinds was thrown at us from the high ground above.

It is only when we see the enormous difficulties to be overcome that we begin to understand why three Scottish Divisions should be taken from widely different parts of the battlefield and be brought to the Scarpe where they went over, all together. It is further worth mentioning that though, like the Guards Division, we were 'storm-troopers' we had (1) to hold the line in trench warfare and (2) to 'foot-slog' in all our big moves, instead of riding in motor buses as the Guards did.

(RLM: About this date I attended the funeral of Alan Whyte; his body, wrapped in a blanket, along with many others, was buried in a deep long trench in a side street of the one-time village of Blangy. A most moving occasion. I wept.)

Arras (2) 1917

ARRAS. APRIL 1917

14th. April. Farquharson and Padre Miller to dinner. Convivial scenes. Saw Harragin on his road to the Transport Lines at midnight. Heard that we are to go into the line again on 18/19th.

16th. Hurriedly sent off to Bois-de-Boeufs in front of Tilloy to take charge of Corps Dropping Station to deal with aeroplane messages. Quiet day. Studied lie of the land and wrote letters home. Never saw an aeroplane.

17th. Went again to Corps Dropping Station. Found no one there, but noted that the place had been shelled in my absence. Waited an hour or two and then buzzed off. Heavy showers of hail.

18th. Told I was to be signalling officer again: vice Hood down the line sick for the third time. For one reason or another this is the 5th. time I have had to take his place. Fed up. Hate being shifted about. Have now been signalling officer 5 times, a/Adjutant once, a/Platoon officer 4 or 5 times, and Corps Dropping Officer. Also Billeting Officer, Intelligence Officer, Interpreter, and Road-maker etc. Expect I will get used to this in time!

Plans and conferences for our next offensive on 23rd. between Monchy and Guémappe. Think it should come off alright. Am getting used to these conferences now, and don't take them so seriously as I used to do, even although it is a matter of life or death. Thank goodness the old C.O. has returned. He is a proper soldier (MacNeil).

19th. Little doing in the morning. After tea Beattie, Farquharson and I went out for a short stroll. After a bit we found ourselves at the cross roads at Feuchy Chapel on the Cambrai Road. Suddenly a shell dropped less than 20 yards from us and covered us all over with mud. I stepped into a deep puddle of mud in addition. We got pelted the whole road back, as the Boche began to fire at some of our guns coming up the road behind us. This was quite a nice walk. Lovely evening. Only we would have been safer on the other side of Arras. We had even forgotten our gas helmets and tin hats!

20th. More conferences. It seems to me that history will sum up the characteristics of this age, not as the electrical age etc., but as the age of Conferences, Concentration and Co-operation. Out looking for wire. Got some from the 29th. Division H.Q.

21st. Conferences again. Mess accounts. Left for the line at 7 p.m. South side of the road this time. Shrapnelled a bit at Maison Rouge. Rough passage across country in darkness to Bn. H.Q. Got there without casualties. Tremendous confusion, however, during the relief. Cursed the R.S.F. heartily, especially their guides, their Signalling Officer and their signalling sergeant. Made myself a bit unpopular with them, but it had to be done for their own good. Spent some time getting out 'B' Coy. onto the right road.

GUEMAPPE - SOUTH OF MONCHY

Sunday 22nd. Went round line early with Signalling Corporal Mitchell. No phones allowed forward. Visited Coys. Everything quiet - too quiet in fact. Saw Tobermory Maclean, Wilson and Miller of 'D' Coy. They had had a bad night with shelling. The line was quiet now, and possessed all the advantages of a new line - these are:- no dugouts, no drains, no shelters and a painful obviousness to the enemy. Visited the Medical Officer at the Farm. Miller of 'B' Coy. wounded by shrapnel. He died later. Final arrangements for communication. Don't like Brigade Scheme. To Bn. H.Q. at night. Visited Brigade H.A. Saw G.O.C. and had a glass of port at his invitation - drinking to success on the morrow! All hopeful there!

MONDAY, 23rd. April, 1917. A Black Monday. The Brigade was to jump off astride the Cambrai Road which ran diagonally across our front. Scots on left, Argylls on Right with a creeping barrage. An echelon type of attack. Up at 4.30 to see the strafe (from Bn. H.Q. about 800 yards behind the front line). Loud and heavy firing.

Noticed loud and terribly ominous, quick and heavy retaliation on to our front line - and feared the worst. Then the usual rumours began. Ferguson of 'A' Coy. back wounded and with bad news. C.O. would not let me go forward to see what was happening. He allowed Muirhead to go instead. Muirhead got a very bad time of it.

Our attack was a failure. The barrage was too fast and of the wrong nature and our men were mown down by guns and by M.G. fire. All the officers except Tobermory, A.G.Cameron and G.H.Mitchell were either killed or wounded. A.G. got 500 yards forward and into a gun pit with a few men, where I found him next morning. The Boche counter barrage was down as soon as ours. They had even been practising during the night and had given us a lot of trouble.

A second attack took place at 8 a.m., but it was useless. Our form of barrage was to make up for the irregularities of our line. It proved impracticable. Our lot suffered tremendous casualties from M.G. fire in the outhouses of Guémappe. Camerons and Seaforths were in the same position. Royal Scots did well but suffered severely. They were in a more favourable position. Many soldiers lost direction too. Beattie, Farquharson and Willie Wilson killed. Southey and Padre Miller both mortally wounded. Padre Healy wounded, also Ferguson and MacIntyre, all officers. Tyson, our mess waiter, was also killed, poor kid.

Tobermory came back to report about 3.30 p.m. after the 46th. Brigade had gone through. He was utterly played out, having slaved like a Trojan. Went forward myself and gathered the Battalion together in the darkness. Got 102, all told. No officers. Could not find A.G.Cameron or Mitchell in the darkness. Took men back to Bn. H.Q. Had to find my way in the darkness, but with the help of my servant and some signalling got them there alright.

24th. Waited for the dawn, and then roamed around, looking for A.G. and Mitchell. Found them with Bateman, well forward, the latter seriously wounded.

Battlefield in a terrible mess. Boche used sulphurous and incendiary shells which made things indescribably bad. 46th. Brigade got Blue Line.

Our Bn. and Brigade sent back to Brown Line. Trudged back with A.G. Cameron and Mitchell. Very hungry and tired. Sorley, J.G.Mitchell, and Capt. Leitch came up as reinforcements. Expect Battalion casualties to be about 300 all told. The Royal Scots hadn't an officer left. Took things easy, trying to sleep in an old Boche dugout. Pretty cold. No word of relief. Felt rather dirty. 3rd. Division said to be coming up.

25th. Reorganising everybody! Visit from Brigadier who was in good spirits in spite of the casualties. Only way to look at things! Was this "Another Glorious Victory" in the newspapers at home? 46th. Brigade in the Line. We are to relieve it tonight. Sent off in the afternoon to look for a H.Q. for the Bn. Got one. Shelled in an artillery dugout. Entrance packed with cordite or some such stuff. They set this on fire.

I was out of that dugout before you could say "Wee Willie Winkie". Got H.Q. in a dugout near the Cambrai Road, near an artillery dugout. Laid new signal lines.

26th. Round the lines (i.e. Companies) with C.O. and Muirhead. It took some six hours hard going. Visited 2nd. Seafort's at Le Bergere Cross Roads, a most poisonous place. Was nearly called to a better, and let's hope, quieter land by some 5.9"s which landed on the little bank at the bottom of which I was walking - three yards away - C.O. and I created a record for the 50 yards sprint.

27th. Did not go round line in the morning. Went round later with McCallum the runner. Saw a company of the Suffolks being blown out of their trenches by a nasty barrage. Lot of sniping. Waited till almost dusk and then risked it across the open. Stayed in line, relieving A.G.Cameron. Made a shelter with Sorley and spent the night in it. Adjutant of the Suffolks shot accidentally. Raids on our right by the Camerons and Gordons on the farm in front of us.

BERNEVILLE. MAY 1917

28th. Heavy attack on our left. Barrage in front of us by our own guns. Everybody too tired to take any notice. Fine day. Bn. relieved at night. I was left behind for 24 hours to stay with 8th. Middlesex. Stayed at their Bn. H.Q. and looked after guides. It was funny to see these Englishmen coming along the trenches, sweating, with greatcoats and full kit on a lovely summer's day! We had had nothing but waterproof sheets. Left at 2 p.m. Missed some nasty shelling and got back to Arras for a bath and food. Bus at 10 o'clock that same night to Berneville, S.E. of Arras. Arrived near midnight.

30th. Sunday. Should be as for 29th. Have lost a day somewhere.

1st. May. To Arras for money.

2nd. to 4th. Sunday rides around the area. New officers have arrived, including Willie Haldane who played in the school rugger team with me.

(The Divisional History, (1926) by Col. Stewart and John Buchan records that our battalion in these two actions, April 9th. to 30th, lost 8 officers killed and 12 wounded, i.e. a complete officer establishment almost. In addition, Colonel MacNeil died of pneumonia, contracted soon after. The men suffered almost as severely in the same period, 92 killed, 305 wounded and 47 missing. The 15th. Division went into action on 9th. April with 433 officers and 11,499 other ranks. It lost 80 officers killed and 203 wounded and 10 missing. A total of 293 officers. There were with other ranks, 887 killed, 4410 wounded, and 723 missing, a total of 6020. Altogether 6313 in three weeks.)

David Robertson and Colin Mitchell also arrived. No word of leave yet.

6th. May. Sunday. Uninspiring service by Padre Kelly of the Camerons. Football in afternoon and watched a good game at night. The recuperative powers of the British Tommy are wonderful.

7th. Blanket fatigue to Wanquentin. Division transferred to XVIII Corps for training - this does not augur well. We are to go further back - high time too! No word of leave yet. Glorious weather. Major Duncan, the "Conscientious Obstructor", in command, as Col. MacNeil has died.

8th. March to Sus St. Leger.

9th. Rode over to Souich and Lucheux with Robertson. Glorious ride and lovely part of the country. Gave Robertson a hot time as he had never been on a horse before. Football match at night. 5 and 6 platoons against 7 and 8. Latter won by 4 goals to 1.

11th. May. A field day with Richards in command. Football. Away riding with Hollins before brekker. Range. Felt disinclined to work. Then a field day under the General's eye. Good fun. Back at 8.30. More conferences. Paid the company. Got word that 10 days leave has been granted to me. Also got word that I can't go on leave - have to take over temporarily as Adjutant. Cheerful!

12th. Plenty of fun. Very busy, yet time for a canter. Adjutant of the Day for Brigade - had to borrow a tunic and kilt for the show. Quite imposing Guards Parade which I got through without any big mistakes.

1ST. LEAVE HOME

14th. May. Field Day. Then buzzed off on leave. Horse to Frevent. Train via Doullens to Abbeville, and then Paris Express from there to Boulogne. Crossed on 16th. Then forgot all about the war for ten days. Succeeded wonderfully well. The details about my leave might be interesting but they don't matter much now.

Sunday 27th. May. Crossed again from Folkstone to France. Not seasick for a wonder. Boulogne at night. Went on to river. Stayed at the Louvre Hotel.

Monday 28th. To Etaples, with early train. Paris Plage in afternoon. Disgracefully quiet. Dinner in Officer's Club. Then wrote an awful lot of nonsense in my diary at night (That would be about my leave, etc.!!!! I forget now R.L.M. 1972).

Tuesday, 29th. May. The Adjutant of the Depot told me I would not get up the line until tomorrow. Felt I could not stand another day in the wretched base so, without saying "By your Leave" to the adjutant I got out the back door, and bluffing the Railway Transport Officer I got on a French passenger train which took me to Hesdin by 11 a.m. - only a short distance from Le Quesnoy where I found the battalion in glorious surroundings. Gibb Mitchell the O.C. Coy. is at the seaside recuperating and a fellow Macleod is in command of the company. Robertson still there and McCallum is back.

Wednesday 30th. Might still have been at the base, eaten by, and eating, flies. Trial inspection parade for visit of C.-in-C. of French armies tomorrow. Of course, tomorrow came, but the C.-in-C. didn't! Bath parade to Caumont, 5 miles off.

Thursday 31st. Felt sad. Was it the all day fruitless parade? or the reaction of leave?

THE BEST OF WAR

Friday 1st. June. Field day. Awfully funny. Macleod lost himself, attacking the enemy on a front of 5,000 yards with a company 30 strong, organised in 4 platoons of 4 sections each. Strength of section = 1 man, commanded by himself! This is the only 'mistake' that Macleod ever made.

(But such was our company strength at this time, instead of 200. RLM 1972). In action afterwards, he showed himself absolutely magnificent, and extremely efficient.

Dined with 'A' Company. Read the Browning Love Letters at night, in bed. Disappointed, though not displeased. Felt I could have written a better love letter myself in spite of my tender years - and lack of experience.

Saturday 2nd. Heard that "Strafer" Campbell, the adjutant is going away to a base job, and that a new adjutant is required. Three names mentioned for the job - Hood, Macleod and myself. Would like the work immensely, but fear there is absolutely no chance. Great meeting at night at 'A' Coy. to celebrate A G Cameron's well-earned Military Cross.

Sunday 3rd. June. Church Parade. Took over 'B' Coy. vice Macleod who becomes adjutant. Out riding in afternoon on "Donald" (the MO's horse) looking over the manoeuvre ground. The beast bolted, I lost my stirrup and cap, and couldn't stop the brute. Nearly had many accidents. After going about two miles like old John Gilpin it stopped. Then we cantered back the same distance, a few miles, to pick up the various parts of my equipment which lay on the road! News of the death of Colonel MacNeil at the base.

Monday 4th. Out all day as O.C. No. 1 Coy. in outpost. Got on very well.

7th. Harry Lauder came to us at night, accompanied by William Hogg, M.P., a Liberal, I'm sorry to say, but a notoriety hunter. His speech to the men was in shocking taste and very ill-chosen.

8th. Lauder again. A party of us rode over to see him.

9th. Practising with tanks. A full day.

10th. Church parade. Cricket against Royal Scots. Did rather well. Won by 1 run. Reading the Browning Love letters in my spare time.

16th. Swimming in the River Conche. Ride in a tank. Toothache. Tremendous heat. Sunday. 17th. Lay in bed until 10 a.m. Some luxury for Active Service! Cycled into Hesdin with Robertson.

18th. Prosecuting at Field General Courtmartial at Fontaine l'Etalon. Very hot day, yet we had hailstones 3/8" in diameter. General McCracken has left the Division, promoted to a Corps. This is a very serious loss indeed as we may not get a man to understand us so well. We need, too, a Scotsman to lead a Scottish Division. Rumour has it that our duty in the coming offensive is to take us to the most salient point of the front at Ypres. Expect that it will be grand show, though we certainly won't take the Hun by surprise as we did two months ago at Arras.

19th. Out training signallers and observers. The former very efficient, the latter the very reverse. We are to move on the 21st. Heard that my school (Hillhead H.S.) are sending out 10,000 cigarettes to the battalion. Very decent indeed! Finished "Micky O'Halloran" by Gene Stratton Porter.

MARCHING

21st. June. Left Le Quesnoy with regret, after having a tremendous row with Major Wilson, O.C. Battalion at the time. As he afterwards, (next day or that day) apologised, everything is now forgotten. Arrived late at night at Blangermont Chateau. Acting as O.C. Coy. We had to leave an officer behind at Le Quesnoy till next day to look after about 20 to 30 of our weaker brethren who could not march owing to the boisterousness and thoroughness of their farewell to the place. Willie Haldane was detailed for this rather unpleasant job. Nearly every man in 'D' Coy. had his waterbottle filled with beer, instead of the regulation water, in spite of orders. The officers however didn't take much notice at the inspection parade before marching off, but when we got on the move the beer became frothy and bubbled over on their kilts. Major Wilson, this was his first experience in commanding the Battalion, dealt most admirably with this delicate situation.

STILL MARCHING

22nd. Blangermont to Tangry. Good billets. Met George Morton plus spurs in a motor car just outside St. Pol. Talked with him on the march about old times and exchanged news about our old school.

23rd. To Auchy-au-Bois as O.C. Advanced Guard. J.F.C. Cameron coming to 'B' Coy. as O.C. Coy., probably - reason, to see if charge of a company steadies him! He made the interpreter helpless at Tangry!

25th. Left early for Boesinghem. Men marching well - none falling out despite the long distances. Rotten billets. Rode into Aire with Robertson and Gray for dinner. Had some trouble afterwards with my horse, but got back alright!

26th. March to Caestre. Air raid.

MORE MARCHING!

27th. Still marching. Up at 3 a.m. and marched into Belgium, via Forge, behind Poperinghe. Bad roads. Country here very flat. Inhabitants different too. Flemish spoken more. French less common.

28th. June. Cleaning.

29th. Training.

30th. Marched to near St. Omer - 22 miles, and it rained all the time.

1st. July. Church parade. Quite noisy again. Bombardment going on. Hope the guns do their work well and save us casualties.

3rd. Battalion practice for the coming show. Cycled with Robertson and McCallum into St. Omer at night. Left at 6.15 p.m. and were getting on fine when we reached the top of the last hill about the town. Began to free-wheel down. I followed Robertson who was going down pretty fast and who was rapidly overtaking some cyclists in front. Meanwhile my pace increased at a deuce of a rate and my front wheel began to rattle. Found my brakes were bust.

Passed Robertson at a terrific rate but found myself running into a horse and cart and two motorists coming towards me from round a corner at the bottom. Don't know how I got past, for the horse began to rear. Then there was a collision behind me (Robertson and the motorists) and a noise below me (my tyre bursting) followed by a jagged rattle as some spokes went west and I found myself disentangling myself from the ruins of the bike at the foot of the hill and being helped up by a sentry of the 7th. Bn. Argylls, of the 51st. Division!

Robertson had a wonderful escape, carrying away one of the motor cyclist's pedals and knocking the man in the side car senseless. When I went back I found him only able to stammer "Me Shocky" (He was a Belgian). Jove! I should think he was. Tried to get a new wheel for my bike from a 4th. Gordon Sergeant. Went into St. Omer and had a nice quiet dinner. Back to the Bn. before midnight.

5th. Company out on working party. Easy day. Offered job of assistant adjutant. Gibb Mitchell to England.

6th. Brigade Field Day. Made Assistant Adjutant. I accepted it on condition the job would not keep me out of the trenches.

THE SALIENT - YPRES. JULY 1917

8th. Left for Arneke to get train to Toronto Camp, half way between Poperinghe and Ypres. No arrangements made for our coming, so we annexed a camp. Busy day. Battalion went up to map square H16 at night to 'Bivies' (bivouacs) shelters etc. I was left behind to look after 'details' at Toronto Camp, a lousy place in a real sense. While not built as a permanent camp it had been used continually as such for three years.

9th. Very busy. This job is no sinecure.

10th. The battalion had 85 casualties last night while relieving the Seaforths. A raid came over. Hun strafed. Our leading companies caught in the barrage - a box one - confusion, and a jam up. The men could not move forward or back. Lieut. Blyth killed. Haldane seriously wounded, Mills slightly. At the moment our figures are 12 killed, 44 wounded and 29 missing among the men.

Some of these poor beggars had never seen war or trenches before, in daylight. They went up in the dark and either fell or were brought out in the dark. A man hardened to it does not mind so much, but it must be terrible for a new fellow. Willie Haldane lost a leg. He was a splendid three quarter at school.

11th. At Field General Courtmartial in the locally famous McMahon case.

13th. Asked Major Wilson's permission for 4th. time to let me go up the line to see the battalion. He let me go, remarking that I would never get near the place. [I had no trench map. Moreover, he had been up the previous day, and had made a terrific song about having to march 20 miles so he naturally wanted us all to think he was the only one who could get up - how human even the greatest of us is!]

JOURNEY UP THE LINE ON A QUIET DAY

I set off with Wright, my runner. (I had dismissed Milligan for impudence, even although I had had him for a year). The first few miles were dusty and not dangerous. Then came a rotten bit. I had intended going along a corduroy track over a marsh, but the near end of it, "Shrapnel Corner" was getting hell when I came up, so I moved slightly to the left along the Roulers Railway.

As soon as I was getting on to it a shower of 5.9"s began to fall so I had to get nearer to Shrapnel Corner again and work my way in between the two places. I next crossed the railway near "Hell Fire Corner", a very nasty spot, and struck out for Dragoon Farm, our Bn. H.Q. Got pestered with desultory shelling all the time.

Owing to the fact that the Huns were round us on three sides of the salient he had only to direct his fire into the centre and he was sure to hit something or other, a store, a dump, a cross road with traffic or a dugout. Every night during this Ypres offensive he succeeded in putting up one or more dumps of ours. Big and dangerous blazes they made too, some leaving holes or craters 30 feet deep and 60 feet wide.

I found H.Q. alright, but it wasn't a farm - just a sort of primeval hut covered over with sods and incapable of resisting even a pip-squeak. Open, too, to the four winds of heaven. Had lunch and then went round the whole line and saw the companies. Strange trenches - quite different from the ditches of Arras and the Somme. Here they were all boarded and revetted, besides being banked up at the sides. At the same time too the sides and parapets were covered with beautiful poppies and daisies. There would be about a foot of water in the bottom of all the trenches. It was really a wonderful sight! Piccadilly trench where we lost all these 85 men was being well attended to by 5.9"s when I was going up, so I gave it the slip and went up another trench. Never like to see poppies now, as it makes me remember the wretchedness of Ypres, and of this particular trench, when, two nights ago, my company lost four sergeants killed.

THE JOURNEY DOWN AGAIN

Went round the line. Tea in a filthy little shelter in the support line. Left Bn. H.Q. at 6.30 p.m. and came back via Ypres. Easy up to a point. Back by Menin Gate and the Ramparts. Passed by the ruins of the Cloth Hall. Not a soul to be seen in the whole of the square. Terrible feeling of loneliness.

Felt like the last man left alive, or as though I had been asleep for centuries and had awoken to find every one dead, and the world in decay and ruin. After every memory of adventures, escapes, battles has left me, I think (to use an Irishism) one will still remain, that of the look and atmosphere of Ypres in 1917.

As we were getting out by the North West Gate, the Hun began to crump the Station with heavies. Wright increased his pace from the regulation 27 inches to 37 inches. I probably beat that! Struck off across country from the Asylum. Things were now quieter. Just as we were approaching Divl. H.Q. I decided to cut a corner. Lucky I did so, for at the very instant at which I reckoned I'd been turning that corner down came some long range stuff.

Got back to Toronto Camp - no sooner back than the camp was shelled. This was about 8 miles behind the line! One shell burst about 30 yards from us and we all got splattered with mud. Such is life in the Ypres Salient! And it is the same every day now.

13th. Managed to put myself on a special course for aeroplane instruction. 2 days it lasts. We should then be taken up in a plane. It will be a change from the monotony of life on the ground. 9,000 cigarettes arrived from Hillhead School. Top hole! Three balloons brought down today.

14th. Up early. Bus to the other side of Poperinghe where I idled away time with the Royal Flying Corps until 3 p.m. Toronto Camp shelled at intervals during the day and night, causing casualties to men and animals.

15th. To R.F.C. again. Gusty day. Disappointed at not getting up. Lot of work on return. Odd ammunition dumps going up at intervals during the day. Our serial offensive and other preparations began today. Rode to H16.c (map square) to meet battalion coming out. Long wait, till after 6 a.m. Am being told that I am now a bit thinner. Got to bed at 8 a.m. today (16th). Up again at 12 and worked with MacLeod.

17th. My left arm slightly poisoned and a little sore.

19th. Reconnoitering billeting area on horseback.

20th. Summaries of evidence. Clearing up in afternoon. Long wait - till after midnight, on Bn. coming out. Heavy bombardment by our guns.

21st. Easy day. Cycled away just as the Hun was dropping some heavy stuff into Toronto Camp. Billeted in L13. Officers in tents. Saw Bn. in alright.

22nd. Sunday. Busy all day. Toothache all day.

24th. Detailed to take A.D.M.S.'s party on Zero Day. Got soaked to the skin. Lunch in Poperinghe. Saw A.D.M.S. and got instructions as to my duties.

Thursday 26th. To St. Lawrence Camp.

27th. Bombed at night.

28th. Rode over to inspect some ground. Push postponed. Hun said to have left his front line. Wise man! Collapse of Russia.

29th. July 1917. A bit wet. And a Sunday.

Ypres 1917

THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES. BEGUN 31ST JULY 1917

30th. July. My 21st. birthday. Lot of knocking about Eerie Camp. Champagne Dinner at night. Had to go away at 11.30 p.m. with my 50 Argyll stretcher bearers. Got them on the move and moved up towards the 'show' which would begin in a few hours' time. Another officer and 50 men of the 13th. Royal Scots now joined my party so I had 100 men.

Got to Bivouac Camp. We were now all ready for the show. Felt things strange of course. Although I had by this time begun to dread this corner of the earth I did not feel the least bit afraid. In previous shows I had gone into action feeling that I would come out again. This time I had no such feeling. Felt, almost knew, that I would not come out again. Did not, however, leave any addresses or messages behind because I believed it unlucky. [So many officers had gone into action who had left addresses to be notified that it became looked upon by me, at any rate, as an ominous sign, e.g. Alan Whyte, and in this show, MacCallum.].

As we marched along, I felt quite cheerful, in spite of this somewhat melancholy reflection, and would not consciously have wished myself anywhere else. Soon, I became so engrossed, that I lost every outside thought, and could only think of the present business. No regrets for the past, and no fears for the future worried me. I mention this psychological state of mine because never in any previous or subsequent battle did I go into action with the same nonchalance combined with the feeling that I was not coming out again and the feeling only lasted the length of the march, being soon replaced by others.

THE ECOLE, YPRES. 1ST. AUGUST 1917

Hefty bombardment at 3.50 a.m. on 31st. when the offensive opened. We got shelled a bit in the afternoon. An R.E. was killed amongst my party and several wounded. I had only one man wounded. Bother about rations which did not arrive until about 6.20 so that I had to march off leaving a party behind to bring them on. Moved up to the Ecole, Ypres. This is where a whole company of the Camerons were gassed a few days previously. No shelling at this time. Heard we had taken the Green Line but that the Division on the right had failed us - I got astonishing confirmation of this later from McClure who had to shoot some of the beggars to prevent them running back. Reported to Menin Gate for duty with my party. Found we were not wanted until 4 a.m.

Wed. 1st. Aug. My H.Q. are in the Ecole. The men are in a cellar, indescribably filthy, with an awful odour and three inches deep in water. Here they have to rest, sleep and eat if they can. I should be down with them but preferred risking it above ground in a tin hut (which was constantly being shelled) behind a broken down wall. A pip-squeak could have finished it and me.

I've read so many descriptions in newspapers of the ruin and desolation caused in this war. Famous literary men have tried their powers of description and All (with the possible exception of Gilbert Frankau) have failed to convey the repulsiveness and awfulness of the scene. The Ecole was one of these places - That's all!

STRETCHER BEARING

Began work at 3.15 a.m. - a cheerless hour. It was raining I think. Moved up. Searched ground up to Blue Line. Terrific rain, heavy and prolonged. Ground churned up. We could scarcely move one foot after the other. Our job was to carry down wounded. This is my first job as a bearer. I hope to goodness it is my last - prefer going over the top.

Heard about the Battalion. MacCallum killed. I'll have to write to his girl. Also Leitch and D.R.Cameron, Gray and Robinson and Sinclair wounded. We took Green Line but had to retire on our right, as that flank was in the air. Division on our right driven back. Losses not apparently heavier than we expected. Huns well prepared for us. You can't lay out ferro-concrete blockhouses with anything less than a 12 inch gun. And we never see them.

STRETCHER-BEARING-DE-LUXE

Tuesday 2nd. August. Clothes in bad state with mud. Moved off again at 11 a.m. - nobody rested - in response to an urgent message. Had to snake a way through three very bad barrages on the way up. I found openings in them more by good luck than anything else. Must have been a terrible strain on those behind, in the rear of our party. I had them in single file, and we could only move slowly. Rested them two minutes in recent No Man's Land but had to get them on the move forward. It wasn't safe to stand. Never before have I seen artillery fire like this. The Somme was a picnic and Arras a joke compared to Ypres just now. Escaped with only one casualty or so.

Got to blockhouse on top of Frezenberg Ridge. Barrage closed down all around us. Took down wounded. Sent off men in parties until I had only three left. Found at last, when no other of our men could be seen, a demented wounded Boche. Felt like leaving the blighter, but could not. Got him on a stretcher. But men objected. Took an end of the stretcher myself. Then Boche turned a machine gun on us as our little party with the wounded Boche stumbled down the Roulers Railway Line. So much for civilised warfare! I fear that no prisoners will be taken by any of my men in the next show.

Dumped the Boche at an 8th. Division dressing station and got a Britisher in exchange. Cruel work for men with a stretcher, owing to mud, and holes, and wire. Thank God I'm not permanently in the R.A.M.C. bearer section, and with a conscience. Finally got back, physically useless, to l'Ecole at 5 p.m. or so. Bombarded all night with messages, so got no sleep.

SERGEANT MCQUARRIE

Here, I have in this party, a sergeant, Sgt. McQuarrie, of 'D' Coy., one of the bravest and best gentlemen I have ever met. He has been utterly invaluable to me on this job. Lord knows all he has done. He'll certainly not get his deserts in this world. I have more respect for this man than for any other dozen I have ever met.

Friday. 3rd. August. Trouble with my men. Had to rout them out myself. The poor beggars, were, of course, done up and many wanted to parade sick. Harangued them in my best (sorry it should have been necessary). Got them out by 5 a.m. Went up with Colonel Worthington to see how things were.

He was almost as filthy a sight as myself, and I must say, from what I saw of him, he proved himself a splendid officer in battle. He didn't seem to care a damn where he went. All the same he wasn't any further forward than I had my men yesterday. Got down nearly all the wounded.

MCQUARRIE AND SELF HAVE A DAY OUT

Sgt. McQuarrie and myself had an awfully narrow escape from a 5.9". We were going back, at the end of the day - all the men had preceded us - down a cobbled road, when a 5.9" burst on the road with an awful noise about 5 yards - not more - behind us. No theory ever invented will account for our escape.

MAKING OURSELVES POPULAR

Went to a blockhouse. Found it stuffed with R.A.M.C. bearers under a sergeant. During the three days I had been in the forward zone I had not seen any R.A.M.C. bearers. It may have been because I was too busy - but I didn't see them. Now my temper simply boiled over at the thought of it. I had those fellows out of that blockhouse quicker than they got in, and striking for the front line. My threat to use my revolver and my looks (as tho I meant it) settled the question. As soon as I got them outside a shell dropped among them, and four were saved the trouble of going forward - they went back on stretchers!

When I got back to the Ecole I found that most of my men, who were back long before me, had been taken by some 15th. Divisional staff officer, shoved into buses and taken Lord knows where. So McQuarrie, a few drifters and myself were left to spend another night in the Ecole. We had jam and cocoa for dinner.

Saturday 4th. August. Paraded about 6 a.m. Walked through Ypres, the Hun not forgetting to put shrapnel over us as we marched out at the Station Gate. Was he not laughing at us? Situation quiet. By dint of stopping lorries and buses I managed to get my party of 16 off to Winnezeele, behind Watou, fairly quickly. Reached Bn. about 11 a.m., a bit tired, and certainly unclean, and reported for duty and for breakfast. Took things easy all day. Couldn't change, as my valise was lost. The Q.M. had left it somewhere.

Sunday 5th. Traced my valise to 7th. Camerons. Found it, less a glengarry and field glasses. Got some sleep at night.

Monday 6th. Lot of work in Orderly Room. Toothache. The officers' recommendation for the show are Capt. Matt Wilson, Capt. McClure, Lieut. J.F.C. Cameron, Sorley and Colin Mitchell (this last did exceedingly well), and I think Prosser later on.

OPERATIONS

31st. July, 1917. Zero hour 3.50 a.m. when a terrific thunderclap of fire broke out. The sky was lit by dozens of flashes at the same time so that it seemed light. Our Division, the 15th., attacked just north of the Ypres-Roulers Railway on a two Brigade front. 44th. Highland on left, 46th. on right, and our 45th. in support behind Ypres. Our brigade, 45th. moved off at zero by the corduroy track south of Ypres and formed up in "No Man's Land" at zero hour. They then advanced through the 44th. and 46th. Brigades to attack the Green Line. The 44th. and 46th. were consolidating on the Blue Line.

The 45th. did their work well and in good style, but the division on our right (8th. Divn.) could not get level with us. When some of them did get up, they fell back again and one of our captains had to go over and use his revolver against one, as an example. Still, our right flank remained hanging in the air. The Argylls and Fusiliers did quite well. Poor MacCallum was killed, shot by a sniper. Captain Leitch, a splendid, frank, and popular officer and D.R. Cameron were both killed. Miller (A.S.) and Sinclair were wounded.

The Battalion was relieved that night by Gordons who had to fall back a little. The Argylls were brought back to the old British front line, but they had to go up next night (the 1st/2nd) for a counter attack. They advanced in utter and complete darkness - no moon or stars - and took the position allotted to them correctly, being the only battalion in the Brigade to do so, so we must confess there may have been a certain amount of luck in their move. They dug in, in front, without losing any men, while the other three battalions were a little unfortunate in losing some men.

Our losses from 31st. were 4 officers killed and 5 wounded, and 140 - 150 other ranks.

THE C.O. AS SIGNALLER

The C.O. Major Duncan - I'm told on all hands - was a perfect marvel and showed a total disregard for danger. He went about waving a huge signalling flag above his head so that ALL his men might spot the whereabouts of his Battalion H.Q. Unfortunately a Hun aeroplane spotted the flag, and brought the Hun artillery on to it, and suppressed him for the nonce. His disregard for danger was like the disregard of a religious maniac for death. What a pity he lacks that most necessary of all things - even before bravery - common sense and 'savoir faire'.

In regard to my own party, I was relieved and happy when the work was done. The R.A.M.C. men were not up to scratch. Fortunately, I must and can say that their officers were splendid, above all was their C.O., Colonel Worthington who richly merited the D.S.O. he got for that day. I saw him on the Frezenberg Ridge in the midst of a barrage, and if it had not been rather dangerous I would have lifted my steel helmet to him!

My instructions, and they were never changed, were to carry wounded in the back areas, which would have been easy, but the R.A.M.C. asked us to do the forward areas, and we did it. I didn't mind where we carried, but the R.A.M.C. did not play up to us. The R.A.M.C. doctors - particularly Captain M---, agreed with this.

My own men, with one exception, were simply glorious, in conditions so tiring, so demoralising and so dangerous that the Somme and Arras offensives (as far as my judgment goes) were almost as picnics to this one.

The carrying alone, through the mud and up and down shell holes and through barbed wire, was in itself absolute torture, as I found to my cost when I had to supply a gap in the last party.

WINNIZEELE, BEHIND YPRES

Monday 6th. Wrote a letter or two.

Macleod, the adjutant, turned to me tonight in the Orderly Room and told me that Sergeant McQuarrie of 'D' Coy, who was in my R.A.M.C. party had come up to him, on behalf of the men of the party to ask him to tell the C.O. how well I had done or something or other in the way of work during these barrages. Felt very bucked at such a thing coming so spontaneously from the men, though it is all nonsense, for I 'had the wind up' all the time. Macleod, I believe told the C.O.

(RLM: In a quite fortuitous conversation a year later with Quarter Master, I learned that the men had recommended that I should receive a decoration for the show, but the C.O. had considered it grossly irregular that the men should do such a thing, and the matter dropped. But I was aware at the time, somehow, that the attitude of the older majors and captains towards me had changed, and they had now accepted me as one of themselves, an original, proved member of the Battalion, and not an untried interloper. Their speech lost a curious harsh element or tolerance, and was replaced by a still more unexpected understanding. Such was the 'esprit de corps' of the 11th. Battalion Argylls. 1972)

Tuesday, 7th. August. Hard at work all day. Finished late at night. Battalion getting big drafts, of very fine looking men too - brand new to this life - poor devils!

Wednesday 8th. Inspection by Divl. General Thuillier, who said a few nice things.

Thursday 9th. Rode over to Steenvoorde for dinner with Tobermory Maclean. Appointed Signalling Officer for about the 8th. time.

Saturday 11th. Rode to Steenvoorde with Prosser in the evening. Heavy rain. Learned that Mackay of the Camerons was missing. Understand that we have to go into the line again. Another "Horoosh".

Sunday 12th. August. Church parade. New minister. Rather enjoyed the sermon. Easy afternoon. Finished Vol. 1 of the Browning Letters - rather a feat for Active Service!

Monday 13th. A chit came in through Division H.Q. from the A.D.M.S. saying that the three officers i/c the Brigade stretcher parties were being brought to the notice of the Divisional General for their good work, and I happened to be one. Don't know what to think about it, because of the men. Pleased on the whole that the R.A.M.C. should take notice.

Field General Courts Martial. 2 cases.

Tuesday 14th. F.G.C.M.s - 4 cases. Very boring. We move up again on Thursday 16th.

Wednesday 15th. August, 1917. This was the night when I rode to Cassel with Smith when he lost his cap, his stirrups and control of his horse, and the Colonel, his temper. It's not worth while trying to play John Gilpin these days - though it is just as funny for the onlookers.

Two more F.G.C.Ms. and yet we are not a bad battalion, as battalions go.

BACK TO TORONTO CAMP

Thursday 16th. Very busy morning. Heard that 16th. Irish Division had taken the Green Line and that we are to relieve them, and do a "horoosh" as the men call it. Hope it will be successful. Moved off from Winniezeele at 2 p.m. Very fine warm afternoon. Got to Toronto Camp about 7 p.m. Saw Nairn of the Gordons on my way up. He's a funny little devil.

17/18th. Tremendously busy. Conferences until late at night. Brigade has rather a rotten task before it. 16th. Division have not been able to get forward at all.

Sunday 18th. Work at top pressure. Tremendous lot of 'stuff' in from Brigade (Paper). At night moved up to map square H17a. Got up safely; bombed at night. Still more midnight conferences. Signalling arrangements for the show completed.

Monday 20th. The balloon just above our heads shelled by 9.4" - pieces falling all around us. The Boche are good gunners - the more I see of them the more admiration I have for them (in a way!). A temporary Medical Officer - would that we had Jimmy Dickson!

"FOR IT" AGAIN

Went on ahead at 4 p.m. with pioneers, signallers etc. to Bill Cottage. A 'windy' passage up the line. Looked round successfully for signal wire. Fine night. Had a slight dinner with the K.O.S.B. Their H.Q. - the worst I've seen for a bit - to wit, a piece of cloth or canvas tied to the lee-side of a broken wall. No landmarks near. A bad spot to find in the dark. Wandered right up to the front line. No communication trenches here, no trenches or any kind - only MUD! Don't think that hell itself can be worse than this place. Laid my line with Signaller Start (a magnificent fellow) and another, a mile long at least. Got shelled to blazes. Took us 5 1/2 hours. We should in theory have been killed in laying this Low Farm line. Got back to Bill Cot at 1 a.m. If I were a millionaire I would take all my signalling section on to my staff. Don't know whether I could get a better amongst them, since they're Argylls - but for dangerous or any other work I'd back them against any others.

WE STAY AT A FARM

21st. August 1917. When I got back I fell into a farm muck pond which I had not seen. Took me up to the arm pits. Took off my kilt and slept as well as I could. In the morning the sun came out and dried it, i.e. the kilt. Boche planes over, and more paper from Brigade. When will we be able to run a war without paper? Heavy shelling round H.Q. Moved up H.Q. to front line at Low Farm.

Low Farm is not a white-washed cottage, but is a filthy, waterlogged Boche pill-box, about 4 feet high. Its western wall is intact, solid and windowless, so that we need not fear our own guns! Its eastern wall is not intact, is not solid, and it possesses windows, through which the Boche sends M.G. bullets - we actually had two or three men who were sitting on the floor inside the cottage wounded by bullets coming in through the window and they were almost level with the ground - of course, Boches were only a few yards away, about 100 to 150, in Beck House and Borry Farm. The door faced the South and was half-blocked by a stone which was an important factor when you consider that Boche had a M.G. trained on it and it took you ten to twenty seconds, according to your girth and accoutrements, to wriggle inside.

The inside dimensions were those of a decent caravan, but half the height, and 30 men were crowded inside it. This is the first farm I've ever stayed at!

WAITING ON THE DAWN

21st/22nd. I was on the move along the line, at intervals, the whole night. It was a dark, black, creepy night and the Hun was very 'windy' indeed. He put practice barrages on us frequently, and nasty things they were. The Bn. was formed up alright, and tapes laid out by the Officers i/c Coys. O.C. Coys. gathered in this wretched farm for a final talk before the attack. Captain Porteous, O.C. 'D' Coy. was shot through the head, and Billy McClure said it was his duty to take over command of 'D' Coy, which he did immediately.

Our men began to assemble for the attack while it was still dark. It was terribly difficult work, for the Hun seemed nervous. He either knew or suspected an attack. He put a particularly damnable barrage on our lines at 3.30, while at 4.35 a.m. he again let loose. In the interval Billy MacClure walked into the enemy's lines in the dark. His servant was taken prisoner, but he himself escaped with a bullet through his steel helmet. Ye Gods! Some men have all the luck!

DAWN - ON 22ND. AUGUST 1917

Zero Hour was 4.45 a.m. and was a sight I will never forget. God knows how anybody got over at all.

This continued for half an hour, when the light was just making itself apparent. Then we noticed a few Royal Scots fall back, and then, nearer us, one or two Argylls. More and more came, so J.F.C.Cameron got his Lewis gun ready and looked after the left half of our front. I took the right half, intending to stop the men, and get them to reform, or if necessary, to dig in where they were.

FAILURE. "WE GAINED SOME GROUND IN FRONT OF YPRES" - PRESS BUREAU

At this time I noticed large numbers of Boche, and a counter-attack was developing on us, and across our front from the direction of Zevencote. The Boche were really getting busy, and their snipers made it difficult to move. I had to go at the double all the time - that, however, did not mean much as the bits of wire, and the mud and other obstructions made me relatively slow.

Got all our fellows who remained, (the others I could not but presume to be either dead or wounded or prisoners), together and spread them out with guns along about 500 yards parallel to the Frezenberg-Beck House Road. Our attack on Beck House and Borry Farm was a failure. These places could not be touched by our artillery. A big shell of ours could bounce off them! Their garrison probably exceeded that of our battalion. J.F.C.Cameron, in his escapade of the previous day when he got within 30 yards of Beck House found it garrisoned, and saw about another 50 men enter it.

After what seemed a long journey I got in touch on the right with the H.Q. of the Royal Scots. Their H.Q. was as bad as our own. I had to enter all doubled up, but the poor fellow who followed, a Scot, almost at my heels, was shot by a sniper, through the head.

The sniper was some 50 yards off. Gradually we got a grip of things and organised a decent but terribly weak line. Boche gave us a thin time of it with his sniping and shelling.

Once I could not help feeling amused. Boche started shelling with light stuff, and I had to get down behind a wall, or rather a bit of a wall. Then our fellows started shelling with heavy stuff which fell short, and I had to crawl round to the other side of the wall, i.e. the Boche side. J.F.C. on the left flank did glorious work. His sang froid was extraordinary. He had rather a bad bit of line with a nasty big curve in it. He and his sergeant, a tough named Flynn, well deserved the honours they got for the show. Not an officer of ours came back, except McClure, Chesney and Muirhead, and they were all badly wounded.

I got the drink and ammunition problem settled by darkness - a difficult business. At night our gunners put down a terrific barrage which cheered us up considerably. Boche replied with another one, but as his shells fell behind us we merely sat still and watched it. Square Farm behind us got a terrific dose. Some of our men were said to be still in front (so Brigade told us from the rear) but we could not get any trace of them, except one or two on the right of my part of the line.

(RLM: I remember we got a message from Brigade at this time saying that Square Farm was being attacked by Boche. This FARM was a good 1/4 mile behind us! The message ended with "Please Explain").

CAMERONS ATTACK BECK AND BORRY FARMS

The 6th. Camerons blew up in detachments at midnight. They were to attack Beck and Borry again, and were supposed to go through us. I sat on the ground and watched them file past in the darkness. Their attack, like our own, proved a failure. One company lost itself, the remainder dug in on the left part of our line. They had only 70 casualties. I fail to see how they could have taken the position, or any position, from the way in which they passed me. Their men didn't get a chance.

Macleod was rather amusing once here. In the afternoon, he decided to take a trip along my part of the line. He went for 200 - 300 yards, and saw all that was to be seen, but the Boche played with him as much as they did with me. He arrived back at H.Q. absolutely breathless, but instead of appearing horror struck or disheartened with what he saw, and with the day's failure his first and only remark was "Well, Thank God it isn't raining".

23rd. My knees began to give trouble. I had fallen several times on top of barbed wire which instead of scratching me went in right through the skin. They swelled up greatly, and to crown all, stiffened completely, so that in moving I seemed to be on crutches. They also got a bit painful.

The runners did glorious work. How these men stuck it I don't know. All my signalling schemes came to naught - a 6 inch cable wouldn't have stood for three minutes in the artillery fire! We used pigeons with effect. The C.O. (Major Wilson) and Macleod moved back to Bill Cot on the 22/23rd. about dawn, on Brigade orders. These two fellows, MacLeod and Wilson, are the finest soldiers, the most efficient officers and the truest gentlemen I have ever met.

GETTING BACK TO TORONTO

The C.O. Major Wilson, came back again in the afternoon, and ordered me down to hospital or to the Casualty Clearing Station. I went about nightfall - 8 o'clock, with Wright my servant. Missed a beautiful crump - one of those big, black, solitary ones that come for no apparent reason, by...well, it seemed inches, although it must have been 40 yards, in the open. Got a limber through Potize to the Field Ambulance at Vlamertinghe, and J.F.C. was left alone in command of the line! Got a A.T.S. injection. I believe I did a bit of talking at that C.C.S. I still smelt smoke. Got a car out of them to take me to Toronto Camp where I arrived about midnight on the 23/24th, still talking a bit!

The battalion was relieved an hour or two after I left it, so J.F.C. was not so unlucky as I felt he would be. Bn. got train from Ypres and arrived at Toronto Camp shortly after me.

24th. August. So tired I could scarcely sleep.

BATTALION IN FOR A THIRD TIME

25th. Bn. ordered to the line again for 26th. C.O. ordered me to stay where I was. I fear I could not have walked a hundred yards anyway, but was terribly sorry to see the battalion go off without me. Bn. is ordered to do a raid on Beck House and Borry Farm. The C.O. managed to change personnel a bit to save the men. The idea of sending men in such a state as our brigade was in - for the third time in three weeks - was preposterous. Fortunately the weather broke completely, and the scheme fizzled out, but the Brigade had a disagreeable three days the 27th. to 29th. Bn. came back to Toronto on the 30th.

Not feeling particularly bright these days. Suppose it's leave I need.

31st. Moving to Wormhout, the first stage of the journey of the Division back to the Arras Front. Thankful to quit the Ypres Salient.

"GOODBYE, WYPERS"

1st. Sept. Now entraining officer for the Battalion. March to Esquelberg for the train. Left for Aubigny behind Arras at 8 p.m.

2nd. Sept. Arrived at 2 a.m. Very sleepy. Guided Battalion through village as I happened to be acquainted with the place and then had an 8 to 9 mile march to the "Y Hutments" where we had met the 10th. Argylls before the April 9th. Arras Show! Arrived there 6 a.m. Slept for an hour and then got busy. Rode to Habarcq with Captain Wilson in the afternoon.

3rd. Sept. Feeling like nothing on earth, with a rash all over me, even on my toes. Must have eaten something. Tinned fruit?. Carried on half-heartedly and then had to go off to 'bed'.

5th. Marched from the huts to Rifle Camp just beside Fred's Wood - the actual ground over which the Battalion had advanced in the 9th. April show. Warm day. Into tents.

6th. Took over temporarily from Macleod who is not going into the line. The poor fellow has had a rotten time with the C.O. Duncan. Wish we had another C.O. Left at 2.15 p.m. for shelters and dugouts on the Railway Embankment, this time just North of the Scarpe. This is a wonderful place now. The shelters are almost palatial looking, but I found mine was leaky. Still, they were like heaven compared with the rat holes at Ypres.

THE SCARPE AGAIN

7th. Spent the day sending in returns to the Brigade H.Q.

8th. September 1917. Immensely busy day. Feeling brighter. Got through lots of work. Swim at night with A.G.Cameron and Emma (Matt) Wilson in a lake beside the camp.

9th. Sept. Church Parade. We are in Brigade Support. Out for a swim. Up late getting out orders for our move tomorrow to the front line.

10th. Change in orders at last moment. Dispositions altered. Bad relief, and guides lost as a result.

11th. to 14th. Worked 19 hours per day. Remaining 5 were spent sleeping, and they were interrupted. It is the unnecessary correspondence which keeps one busy. I enjoy the Adjutant's work, however. Went round line at night, but it means a tremendous amount of work when one returns. Relieved by 7th. Camerons on 14/15th. Got to bed at 3.15 a.m. Easier day. Very tired. Visited Alan Whyte's grave and got some improvement going. Hot bath in Arras. It was grand! Hope we can get them in Heaven. Good sleep. Heard of George Mackinlay's death in action. (Hillhead School).

16th. Sept. Too busy to attend Church Parade. Macleod goes on leave tomorrow. Hurrah! It's my turn when he gets back! And then I'll waken up Glasgow!

"SITUATION QUIET"

Lunched with Captain Beith of 10th. Argylls, but introduced him to the C.O. as Captain Ian Hay. He is a good story teller. Author of "The First Hundred Thousand".

17th. Cold bath!

18th. Cold bath - each in a huge crater filled with lovely clear water in Blangy Wood. Awful rumour that Captain A.W--- is coming to the battalion.

19th. Took things easier and found that it paid. C.O. expects the dickens of a lot done. I palmed off a lot on him and kept him going.

20th. Fed up with C.O. Argument with him. The blighter has a conscience and allows himself to be bullied by it. No use in the Army! As a result he is full of mad quixotic ideas. Cycled into Arras for a breath of air in the morning. Have got a good cross made for Whyte's grave.

22nd. September. Cold night. Signs of winter. Did not have a bath. Seven new officers arrived:- Welch, C.E.Black, Cassie, Sutherland, Evelyn, McElwee, and Muirhead. Highly interesting situation created thereby. Took McElwee into my tent with Sorley in order to ensure that he'd not commit any indiscretions.

Tonight, "Y" reckoned by common consent to be an out and outer, offended and insulted everyone at dinner. (I can't remember him. R.L.M. 1972)

Sunday 23. Moved off to Scots Valley Camp. Posted McElwee to 'B' Company. "Y" placed in open arrest by C.O.'s order. Took a summary of evidence against him, a job I did not like at all. Gave young McElwee a bit of advice at night as I had heard some officers quoting his remarks.

24th - 26th. Business as usual.

27th. Moved to Wilderness Camp in the morning, relieving 13th. Royal Scots. Bleak hillside. Had fine sleep and did not rise until 8.30 a.m. Have not had much exercise of late. Will remedy that when my leave comes. Had Ryan the Brigade Major to dinner. Pulled his leg about being in love - the poor devil's just back from leave - and looked it!

Sat. 29th. Feeling fine. Did my work at express speed. Hear Macleod is back. He sent up some fish which was much appreciated.

Sunday 30th. Macleod up. Handed over clear to him. Buzzed off at 9 p.m. from Bn. H.Q. Visited Q.M. and Major Newall, the latter being in his usual spirits. Train at midnight.

LONDON

Monday 1st. October, 1917. Arrived at Boulogne after 7 1/2 hours journey. Was caught at the station and given some 200 men to march somewhere or other. For all I know they may still be marching, for I left them, marching, at the first street corner and doubled back for the boat. Left at 10.40. By 12.40 we were in the train at Folkestone. Crossed over with General Allgood, our G.O.C. Glorious day. Felt I could almost make a sailor.

Arrived London 2.30, sleepy, tired and dirty. Visited Cox's Bank at 16 Charing Cross, and relieved Mr Cox of the anxiety of keeping money for me. Had a barber at Hotel Cecil followed by bath at Euston Hotel, I think. Had lunch, tea. Roamed about. Behaved myself! Entered a picture house. Three people in it. Came out. Air raid on. Went to St. Pancras Hotel - people outside seemed to have the 'wind up'. Sat inside the hotel, on the stairs, listening to some music. I remember the piece was "Destiny Waltz".

Train three hours late in leaving. Slept for 12 hours in it till 8 a.m. on 2nd. October, and reached Glasgow at 12.10 p.m. Here we draw a blank, as the things which happen on leave, though interesting, don't affect the situation on the Western Front. (The Divisional History by John Buchan gave the losses of the 11th. Argylls as follows:

10th. July. On relieving the Seaforths - one night on way up. 12 killed, 44 wounded. 29 missing. These last must have just disappeared in the mud and shell holes. They were not prisoners.

Operations, i.e. Two battles in period 29/7 to 31/8/1917. Officers. 6 killed. 13 wounded. 5 missing. Other ranks 41 killed. 278 wounded. 135 missing. A total of 563 for the battalion.

The casualties for the 15th. Scottish Division totalled 6468. The division strength was about 12 or 13 thousand. R.L.M. 1972).

(Here ends Vol.1 of my diary, covering the first 13 months of my service in France. Now follows a list of the officers who served with my Battalion, the 11th. Argylls during that period. The normal establishment of a battalion is about 22 or 23 officers. R.L.M. 1972.)

Officers of the 11th. Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, in France, September 1916 to amalgamation with 8th. Territorial Battalion of the Regiment, 10th. June, 1918.

Lt.Col. M.MacNeil, C.M.G. Died R.G.Miller (Padre) Died of wounds Major Alston Died Morrison Killed Major H.A.Duncan, D.S.O.Invalidated E.W.Wilson Killed Lt.Col. G.L.Wilson, D.S.O. Died George Beattie M.C. Killed Lt.Col. J.Mitchell, D.S.O. Died J.Farquharson Killed Capt. W.F.C.McClure Wded. A.W.Gray Capt. G.F.Macleod C.R.Gray Killed (Became Baron Macleod of Fuinary) J.Orr Sick U.K. Capt. C.A.Maclean Wded. D.T.McAinsh Sick U.K. Capt. A.Sc.Campbell Wded. Gillespie Capt. J.F.C.Cameron Wded. Mills to R.F.C. Capt. A.G.Cameron Young Sick U.K. Capt. C.D.Richards Sick U.K. Bates Sick U.K. Capt. Porteous Killed Ypres Bennett (Q.M.) Capt. J.G.Mitchell Transferred Baillie Wded. Arras '17 Capt. Leitch Killed Ypres Heyworth Wded. Capt. N.G.Wright Transferred Weir T. Wded. Capt. M.Wilson Wded. died '18 Ferguson A. Wded. Capt. D.Sorley Duncan Wded. (Became City Analyst, Glasgow) Shankland Wded. Capt. W.Irvine Wded. Capt. Mclvor L. to U.K. Capt. Hood Sick to U.K. Capt. Healy (Padre) Wded. Lt. Cadett Transferred Capt. Wilson U.K. (Well known Scottish artist) Capt. Irwin Base Ewing Killed Ypres Major Newall Base Walter Miller Died of Wounds Strathie W.J. Chesney Wded Ypres '17 Stirrock Sick U.K. Denholm Wded. Sutherland Transferred F.C.Stewart Wded. H.R.Macleod Wded. Dow Killed A.R.Muirhead Wded. Richmond Prisoner of War A.B.Muirhead Wded. Hewer Killed Brown Killed in Raid Arras '18 Niven Killed Robertson Killed Enslie Killed Arras '17 Raid D.H.Stewart Killed Matson Wded Ypres '17 A.R. Smith Wded. Black Killed Arras '17 Raid Bertram Sick U.K. Stratford Wded. Janieson Gordon Roberts (To Trench mortars) Anderson Burbridge Mackie Sick U.K. Horton Base M.Mackay Killed Arras '18 Hurrell G.H.Mitchell Killed Ypres '17 W.B.Mitchell Wded. Fyfe. Wded. Crawford Sick U.K. A.H.Whyte Killed Bateman Wded. Harragin Died Alexander Wded. W.C.Smith (became doctor) McIntyre Wded. G.Campbell Sick U.K. Turfery Transferred R.L.Mackay Wded. Ruthven Wded. D.G.Prosser MC Wded. Evelyn J.L.Stewart MC Wded. Flind Wded. Hunnybun Wded. McElwee Wded. D.Robertson Wded. Forrester (Became M.P. for 25 years) D.Kerr Wded. Hollins Transferred Wded. G.Kerr Sick U.K. W. Haldane Wded. Colin Mitchell Wded. Innes Sick U.K. Blythe Killed Ypres Gilmour Killed Somme '16 H.Cameron Sick U.K. Scott Killed Somme '16 D.R.Cameron Killed Ypres Henry

Wded. MacCallum Killed Ypres Donaldson Sinclair Wded. C.E.Black To R.F.C. Bradshaw Capt. Welch Wded. MacCaskill Sick (?) U.K. Bruce Died (influenza) Dixon Sick U.K. Suthery Died of Wounds Arras '17 Christie Wded. R.S.Dobbie Killed Kilgour Cummings Transferred Capt. Shewan Killed McCullick Transferred Todd Killed Moffat Transferred Capt. Cook (?wded) U.K. Shearer Transferred Coogan Wded. Boag (Brigade) Capt. Dickson R.A.M.C.

List of Officers of Old 1st/8th. Argylls who joined up with the 11th. Bn. Argylls to form the New 1st/8th. Argylls.

Capt. A.M.Pollock Wded. Capt. Matheson Major Kirsop Major Robert Moir Transferred Capt. Phillip Capt. Haddow Capt. MacIntosh Killed Lt. Caldwell Lt. Ritchie Lt. MacGregor Lt. Mactaggart Lt. David Barbour, M.C. Lt. Chas. Munro Capt. John Dusseldorf, M.C. Capt. Bugbee (U.S.A.) Transferred L.Swan Wded. Lt. M'Creath Lt. Smith Wded. Lt. Aitken Lt. Svenson Lt. Johnson Lt. Fisher Lt. Mitchell Lt. Elliott Lt. Hogben Lt. Furness Lt. MacBrayne Lt. Russell Lt. Hamilton Lt. Tolliday Wded. Lt. Thom Lt. Robertson Died of Wounds Lt. Cadell Lt. Gillies Lt. Traves

My diary unfortunately does not record the fates of some of these 35.

Arras (1) 1917-18

OCTOBER 1917

15th. Left Glasgow with night train for London, as my leave is finished.

16th. October. Thrown out at Shorncliffe, above Folkestone. Very stormy day with heavy seas running. Informed that the boat would not cross today, so took an exceedingly good lunch. After lunch we were informed that the boat would sail at 2.30 p.m. Left then, tremendous rolling and pitching. Everybody sick. I remember well standing at the rail with a general on my left hand and a major of the R.A.F. on my right, and talking to the deep with them. I felt like quoting "Death the Leveller" to them, substituting "seasickness" for "death". There was some humour in the situation. Boulogne. Put up at the Meurice and went to bed after tea.

17th. 11.30 a.m. train to Arras, tiring journey. Arrived at Q.M. stores at 7 and then went to Officers Club for dinner. Heard that the battalion had carried out a small raid. Went up to Battalion next day, and started work again as Asst-Adjutant.

20th. Bn. at Stirling Camp. Saw C.O. In future, whenever I write "C.O." here, the letters mean "Conscientious Obstructor" for that is my own and also the general opinion of Lt. Col. H.A.Duncan.

23rd. Am at Q.M.'s place in the meantime.

24th. Sat on F.G.C.M. - two simple cases with Major de Haviland.

25th. Emslie killed on patrol.

26th. Bn. came out of line.

28th. Wasted a lot of time at a G.C.M. before a court not properly constituted. Cold weather. More upheavals in the battalion.

29th. Officers all fed up and numbers wanting to leave or transfer. Battalion spirit being stamped out by C.O.

30th. Bn. moved into Left sector. Macleod came back to 'details' for a rest, and I went in as a/adjutant. Weather wet and cold. More 'Strafes'. Spent a very busy three days until night of 2nd/3rd. Nov. when we were relieved. During these three days in the line the number of letters, telegrams and reports received or sent out by me was no less than 451! I counted them! War! Eugh!

4th. - 6th. Nov. Very busy time. Had splendid row with C.O. in which he got it rather hotly from me, for all that he could say at the end was that I was not to teach him his business. If he had had any gumption he would have sent me back to my company.

12th. Up the line to see the new sector. Everything very quiet. Looked almost as though the Huns were going back. Gas cloud alarm in early morning.

14th. Moved to front line again. Left Bn. of the right Brigade sector.

15th. Busy day. Round line, working hard at O.P. Deuce of a mistake with a Power Buzzer message. Not encoded.

16th. Round line with Major G.L.Wilson, and then later again with the C.O.

'A' COMPANY'S RAID

17th. 'A' Coy. carried out a raid under J.L.Stewart. I was in front line at the time, watching, but our guns put up a splendid barrage, only one battery made a mistake in zero time and peppered away over our fellows' heads for four long minutes. Three men missing. Practically not a Boche seen, unless at a distance, when they were driven into our barrage. We lost three men. Remained in front line during the night.

19th. Bn. relieved. Back to Stirling Camp.

20th. Orders ready for action in event of a Hun retreat. Our offensive has opened on the South.

LAST OF THE C.O.

23rd. Had to go back for F.G.C.M. in the morning. Strafer Campbell back! What a sensation! No more news about Boche going back! Back to line at night.

24th. Busy day. Made out a report on our front line wire for Bde. who, with Division, seem to expect a Hun attack. They don't seem to know their own minds for a day. Sometimes, in the one despatch from Bde. we get "G" instructions in the event of Hun attacking and "Q" information on where dumps will be formed in the event of Hun retiring. In the end we remained steady until the end of March 1918! Did duty with 'A' Coy. at night as they were short of officers. Dirty night but very quiet.

25th. Went to 'A' Coy. again.

26th. Nov. Bn. relieved. C.O. ordered to base as physically unfit.

(By this time, the morale of our Bn. had reached such a 'low' that in the Bn. H.Q. dugout, where only a canvas screen separated officers from men, our cook, mess waiter and servants were singing out loudly the most foul obscenities about the C.O. These choruses were known and sung throughout the whole unit. Officers and men shared the same feelings. R.L.M. 1972)

Back to Arras.

WE RELIEVE 61ST. DIVISION

27th. Just as we have settled down in Arras we are told to go up the line again - for what? - no one knows as orders came in at midnight. We are to take over from 61st. Div. on our left.

28th. Another F.G.C.M. C.O. to go to base as "physically unfit". Major G.L. Wilson in command meanwhile - Hurrah! What a difference! Battalion moved up in buses. What a luxury! Guides led everyone astray. Glorious view of Hun lines. This is a new piece of the Arras sector for us. Owing to the pressure in the South our brigade has taken over a whole divisional sector. It extends from South of Gavrelle to the vicinity of the Scarpe.

A HUN RAID - CAUGHT IN THEIR BARRAGE

29th. Nov. Roaming about the line, getting to know the countryside. Saw lots of smoke in the Boche lines, coming from the coal pits which he was working. In afternoon, I took a walk with Wright, my runner - found ourselves on way up to centre Battalion. Suddenly a terrific local box barrage fell around us. M.G.s, 4.5"s and 5.9"s. At the same time he raided (4.15 p.m.) a sap held by the 6/7th. R.S.F., the battalion whose front I was visiting. Wright and myself got completely caught in this barrage - first we got driven out of a communication trench by the M.G. fire into the open. Then we got into separate shell holes.

Hun put a barrage of 4.7"s in a line about 100 yards in front of us and of 5.9"s about 50 yards behind us, so that we got the 'overs' of the former, and the 'unders' of the latter around us. Then they dropped the range of their 5.9"s and both of us sprinted forward to a half-dug dugout in the midst of the 4.7" barrage. We just had to take the risk and it paid! Hun made a bad mess of the trenches!

When things got quiet we went along the front line to the sap which was in a very bad way, and I went out along it to see the end. Quite a nasty mess - a large number of Boche hand grenades in it. I then found the man who had been on sentry and asked him for details. He could give none as he "had run for it" along with his friends - so he said.

30th. We got, with the necessary alterations, the true, official story of the raid in which 10 Huns had taken part.

It says a lot for the energy and resource of the Huns that they should have spotted our relief one day (they couldn't help spotting it) and should have raided next day - for identification purposes of course.

Busy day. Kept clear of barrages which are not intended for me. Mock Court-martial at night on Macleod. Charge was 'aggressive optimism'. Was found guilty. Great fun! 1st. December 1917. Relieved in afternoon by 8th. Seaforths. Came out early in order to get orders out. Weather breaking down but life is more comfortable than it was last year on the Somme at this time. A Boche master-stroke just South of Cambrai push. Heavy loss to the British.

2nd. to 7th. A quiet life.

8th. O.C. Advance Party to trenches opposite Roeux. In line, (front or support) until the 23rd. Acting as Intelligence Officer, but feel it is a job I am not suited for. Very busy tour. Had an amusing rencontre one day with the Divisional General, Reed, V.C. whom I took to be a 'super-American tourist officer', and to whom I spoke with some blaséness. We had a gas attack at 4 a.m. on the 19th. and had to wear our respirators for about an hour. The smell was very strong.

23rd. Relieved by 7th. Camerons and went for a Bath.

24th. Atmosphere in Arras becoming Xmas-y.

CHRISTMAS 1917

25th. Christmas Day. Rose at 8.45, feeling very pleased with life. Church. Grand morning. Heavy lunch at Officers' Club, then wrote a few letters. Colin Mitchell to be Lewis Gun Officer, and Strathie, Intelligence Officer. I'm to go on a six week signalling course. Tremendous Christmas Dinner at H.Q. We killed several fatted calves. Adjourned to 'B' Coy. where we found the rest of the battalion in grand form (some in too good form!). Rather a jovial time. Bed 1 a.m.

26th. Dec. Plenty of snow.

27 - 31st. Routine work out of the line to keep one busy.

31st. We move to Simencourt tomorrow, taking over from 3rd. Grenadiers. The Guards Officers are very snobbish. They will scarcely reply to an infantry officer's "Good morning" when they meet. Very nice quiet dinner at night. Tobermory Maclean as guest. Round to 'A' Coy. at 12.30 a.m. J.L.Stewart keeping things lively there. Left at 2 a.m.

OUR NEW COLONEL

Major James Mitchell, D.S.O., late of 13th. Royal Scots (in same Bde.) is now in command of the Battalion. He was an original 'sub' of ours, and is tremendously popular, and is acting as a general tonic. We feel it is a pleasure to work for such a man. His efficiency, his sense of duty, combined with common sense and his good humour are making us a new lot of men - for the late C.O.'s presence undoubtedly lowered our spirits.

1918

1st. January. Battalion moved back in the afternoon to Simencourt. Roads iced and very slippery. Passed the Guards' transport column en route. Have never seen any transport in such a filthy condition. We took over billets and huts from the Guards Division. Their discipline must have been knocked out of them by the Cambrai show for their huts were in a shocking state - in many cases the planking of the roofs had been taken off and used as firewood. In some the walls had been similarly treated, and the huts were consequently useless.

2nd. - 4th. Training resumed. When will we be able to consider ourselves 'trained'?
5th. Colonel Mitchell had all the officers out this morning. He took us over a lot of ground, pumped us with questions and shook us up splendidly. G.O.C. lectured to us at night, and then came to Bn. H.Q. for dinner. Frost still keen. Things really going well.

HAUTE-AVESNES - XVII CORPS SIGNAL SCHOOL

6th. Up early - 6.30 a.m. and got stuff packed for transport. Walked over to Haute-Avesnes to XVII Corps School, where I am to take a course in signalling - my first course since coming to France sixteen months ago - a rather long period for a sub. to go without a course. Glorious winter day. Photo taken at Habarq. Got settled down in a somewhat cold looking hut.

7th. Test exams for entrance. Made P.M.C. being the only Scotch Officer in the signalling line. Am in with a lot of gunners and English officers. Met Mather Campbell of Hillhead School on the course. He was in the Seaforth's. Last time I saw him was at H.H.S. in 1909, when he threatened to punch my nose, and I his. And both being somewhat prudent and probably a little frightened of each other we decided to call the fight off until a more convenient season! (I don't remember him R.L.M. 1972) And now I meet him in this 'Crystal Palace' of a camp in France! Poor Campbell was killed very soon after the school broke up.

8th. - 12th. Cold weather. I am not enthusing over the work.

12th. Along with Burgess I walked over to Donald Simpson's grave at Aubigny.

13th. Meant to go to church, but couldn't find it, so had a fine lazy day instead. Read Browning.

15th. Pay raised by 3/- per day.

19th. Rode to Arras. Am having too easy a time - tends to be boring.

22nd. Guest night at the School. Quite a good orchestra. Great scenes after dinner. One of the last scenes before breaking up was the Colonel of the School with the G.O.C. Corps "Hooching" in an eight-some reel!

23rd. Went to "The Follies" at night at Etrun. (Not what you think, dear Reader, but an Army concert party! R.L.M. 1972).

25th. January. BURN'S NIGHT! The Sassenachs who run this show organised a dinner, ostensibly in honour of the Bard, but really for one magnificent 'blind'. C.O. and all the staff of the school plus guests (from the corps - Archie Whyte of Hillhead H.S. was among them) were all present and music was provided by the Household Battalion. Quite a good dinner. Band and pipers not very successful as the former knew no Scottish music and the latter only played laments and slow marches. Proceedings ended noisily at 11 p.m.

26th. Rode to Arras with Burgess.

27th. Indifferent sermon on the miracles from a padre who had lost all his breath cycling up the hill to Haute-Avesnes.

29th. Finished the Browning Letters - one of the biggest feats of the war! It has taken a tremendous effort of will on my part to get through them. Felt that if I had been in love I could have written better letters than those!!

31st. Jan. Hockey with the NCOs.

Feb. 2nd. Another exam. Didn't shine in it. Went over to Aubigny to see about a cross for Donald Simpson's grave.

3rd. Breakfast in bed. Some luxury!

5th. Saw most exciting smash of an aeroplane against the buildings and tents of the 13th. Squadron R.F.C. Machine turned turtle and nose dived. Pilot unhurt. Am doing a fair amount of reading. Enjoying "Ann Veronica" by H.G.Wells.

6th. Over to Arras for bath. Heard that the battalion was just moving into the line from Wilderness Camp. So I haven't missed any trench tour during my absence at this signalling course.

Am somewhat disgusted with the way this signalling course is run. The chief instructor is a weak-kneed pliable individual who can be wangled into anything.

To Aubigny on 9th. Cross for Donald Simpson's grave finished.

12th. Capt. Liddle the instructor, informed me that the C.O. of the Signalling School had applied to Corps H.Q. to have an extra officer instructor sent to the school and that he had asked for me. I told Liddle to get the thing withdrawn at once. He told me it was too late, so I wrote strongly to the battalion to get them to stop the business. I don't want such a job as this. The chief instructor is a sufficient nonentity himself, and there is no excuse for an assistant nonentity to him.

Guest night at the School. Breezy.

13th. Lecture by G.O.C. Corps. - Sir Charles Ferguson. Quite good and well delivered. Infantry school broke up.

15th. Exams. all day. Did fairly well. Had average of 99 1/2% in all my messages and reading. Guest night. Liddle and an American doctor to dinner. Made short speech.

Saturday 16th. Told to remain on at the School. Went up to the battalion which I found in the support trenches. Saw C.O. who was angry at the School trying to keep me - but he refused my application for leave! Visited 'B' Coy. Dinner at Details with Major Wilson. Gib. Mitchell back. Walked back to Haute-Avesnes at midnight.

Sunday 17th. Am pretty sure I will get back to the Battalion soon. Went to St. Pol, had lunch, bought some books. Stopped a staff car, and got back to Aubigny for tea. Shifted into a fine comfortable hut with a fire. Finished "Mr Ingleside".

Monday 18th. Arras for a bath. No word yet.

REJOIN BATTALION

19th. Feb. Word to rejoin the Battalion. Hurrah! Back at 6 p.m. and slept the night at Details.

20th. Played about with a rigger ball.

22nd. Bn. came out of the line to Wilderness Camp.

Sunday 24th. Church. Rigger afterwards. Football match between 'A' and 'B' Coys. Latter won by a corner. Jock Stewart of 'A' lost 100 francs on the game.

Monday 25th. Up to see 6th. Camerons.

26th. Relieved 6th. Camerons in support. Fine night. Moved across the open.

LEAVE

27th. Off again. Round line in morning. Hun crumping our batteries with 8 inch. Macleod back from leave. Told I could go on leave. Hurrah! Dinner at Details. Wet night. Train at 11 p.m.

Thursday 28th. Feb. Reached Boulogne at 7 a.m. Boat at 10 a.m. Rough crossing but fortunately not sick. Tea at the 'Troc' with Stannard. Left for Glasgow at 8.50 p.m. and got home next morning at 8.50 a.m. On the go at 10 a.m. Round the town. Then the fun began!

Wednesday 13th. March. Leave finished - Damn! My morale is very high, however! Reached London 11 p.m. Slept at Belgrave Mansions Hotel.

Thursday 14th. Train 7.30 Victoria. Did not, of course, see the Leave Party of which I was nominally in charge! Didn't worry either. Left England 1.30 p.m. Got to France at 3.30 p.m. Not sick fortunately. Tea at Officers' Club, Boulogne. Dinner at Meurice, where I stayed.

Friday 16th. Grand Day. On move again. Arrived Arras 5.30 p.m. Back to the old life. Bn. just coming out of the line. Place quiet, but evidence of 'wind up' everywhere. Dined with Bradshaw. Slept at "Chateau Strafer".

16th. Blew up to Bn. Found all well. Big two company raid in preparation. Hope young M. won't be in it. Would like to go myself! (Honest? RLM. 1972). Heard that as I was the only subaltern who had been 12 months continuously with the battalion I may get home for six months rest. At any rate my name had to be submitted for it, but with the recommendation that I do not go. Don't know whether I will go or not. Don't know whether I'd like to go or not!

Appalling 'wind up' all along tour front on account of possibility of Hun attacking. Quiet night, of course!

Sunday 17th. March. Rose at 5 a.m. as 'stand-to' representative at H.Q. Artillery very noisy. Bed again at 5.45 a.m. Church. Glorious day. More preparations for the raid. Young M. is in it. Wish I could get in. May manage it, somehow, if I go over on the sly. Football in afternoon - very enjoyable.

18th. March, 1918. Out with the signallers. Played soccer against the corporals of the battalion. A good game. Dined in Arras with some of 'B' Coy. officers. Back by 11.30 p.m.

Tuesday 19th. Took over H.Q. for Support Battalion. Front coys in shell holes, and very uncomfortable. Fairly quiet night.

20th. 'Stand to' at 5 a.m. Round line in morning. Very wet. Fine afternoon however. Bn. H.Q. shifted to Feuchy Chapel Cross Roads.

BOCHE OFFENSIVE BEGINS.

Thursday 21st. March 1918. Wakened at 5 a.m. by terrific bombardment. Shells of all calibres coming over us in hundreds, many of them gas shells. All our wires to companies broken early on. Two signallers out repairing them, returned 7 a.m. were no sooner back than the wires were broken again.

Went out with the signallers Stirton and Stark. Had a very thin time. We stood right in the middle of a barrage of gas shells from one battery, wearing respirators and mending the wires. Sometimes the shells came within 8 yards. This continued for 1/4 hour. Seemed like centuries to me. I would have run like billy-oh to get out of it, if I had not had these two signallers with me. They didn't seem to care, either.

The line went disc. as soon as we got back. Two more men out with little effect. After breakfast, as the bombardment still continued heavily, I rummaged for wire, and by using small pieces, I got on to a buried cable where I got three companies. Visited 'B' and 'C' companies. Did work party in afternoon for latter company.

Glorious afternoon. Thank the Lord I always have time to note the weather. Sun warm. Shelling now not so bad.

EVACUATION OF MONCHY

On this day, the Hun attacked to the South of Arras and along the Somme district, and made tremendous progress. Village after village was taken, and our 5th. Army received a terrible hammering.

Tuesday 22nd. Pretty busy day. Our quarry at the cross roads, Feuchy, strafed heavily. Good weather, but muddy.

Saturday 23rd. March. Ordered to withdraw from Monchy, withdrawal to 3rd. system to be completed by 3 a.m. Reconnoitered 3rd. system (in front of Feuchy Chapel cross roads) and got companies in by 2 a.m. We thus became front line battalion - a very fortunate circumstance, as we were to discover later.

Saturday 24th. March. Boche attacked Monchy to find it completely empty, except for a company of Camerons who were rear-guard, and did little other than guard themselves. The two men in Monchy (Camerons) who looked after the gum boot store were taken prisoner. Jimmy Flind did a very good show coming back slowly and keeping his Lewis gun busy. We 'stood to' early. Felt a little tired. Watched Boche come over the ridge.

Fosse Farm evacuated. Some amusing scenes there, as the occupants did not know about the withdrawal there was some difficulty in persuading them about it. An R.E. officer there was awakened from sleep in his pyjamas! We were in contact with the Boche all along our front line at midday, and there was plenty of sniping. 'A' and 'C' Coys. in front line. No shelters practically, but fine deep trenches - too deep in fact, in places. Few shells. Men fed up at leaving Monchy. Got signals going fairly well. Later on, the Boche bombarded us fairly heavily, and we had a few casualties.

AT WAR AGAIN

Monday 25th. Boche had been busy all night, although we had patrols out. He had got his big trench mortars up and was using them prettily. Stewart had a very narrow escape from one. Round line as usual. Shelling more intense, and bursts more frequent. The whole atmosphere more tense. Our rear areas got well shelled. Our Bn. H.Q. was in a large pill-box beside Feuchy Chapel Cross Roads. They were large and cold, but pretty safe, being old Boche ones. I visited the Seaforths on our right several times.

(Then follows an entry in my diary under the day of Monday 25th, which seems a repetition of the incident of wire mending under gas shell fire of the previous page, except that I mention Serjeant Mitchell's name in addition and also say we clipped our respirators over our noses but without putting the helmets on our heads. My memory now does not help me to be clear on the number of incidents. RLM. 1972).

BRIGADE RESERVE AT TILLOY

26th. March. Busy day. Relieved late at night by 13th. Royal Scots who came into front line. Camerons went back to support, and we to reserve - about 2 a.m. on 27th. - in the Army Line in front of Tilloy-les-Moufflaines.

Rotten H.Q. in most difficult place. Easy to spot from the air but difficult on the ground. Got signals going again. Round line again. Kept busy, and so got very tired and sleepy.

BOMBARDMENT BY BOCHE

March 28th. Thursday. Wakened up after two hours sleep at 3 a.m. by deuce of a bombardment. The very earth seemed to tremble, just as at Ypres last year.

Gas shells in hundreds came over, and the back areas got a big share. In the darkness we could do nothing, but wait on the dawn. All our lines, both forward and back, became broken. Bombardment of our lines kept up by Boche for three hours. Those poor devils of runners - who, I think, are without doubt and with no exceptions the finest and bravest men in the services - had a bad time, for they were called upon for tremendous exertions.

THEIR ATTACK BEGINS - ARRAS 28TH. MARCH 1918

About 6 a.m. the bombardment became even more intense, and we all stood to, for dawn. Meanwhile Boche attacked our front lines. Things were very nasty with shelling for an hour. It became rather unpleasant moving about. The C.O., Colonel Mitchell, buzzing about everywhere without worrying, was wounded about 7 a.m. and Captain Wilson therefore took command. He was very soon blown up and had a lucky escape from death. Macleod therefore became C.O. now.

Bombardment did not become any easier. I went along to see the Seaforths once or twice, and knocked around generally. The Boche at this time did not come into contact with our Bn. as we were in reserve. All our casualties were from artillery fire, and a few from M.G.s. The Camerons and Scots in front fell back a bit in some disorder, the latter having a poor time of it. Their front lines had had a tremendous strafing in the morning from heavy trench mortars and gunfire. The Boche attack was admirably conceived and executed. He used a lot of 106 Fuse - i.e. instantaneous burst. From what we saw in these two days or so his men, either as individuals or as a body, were most excellent soldiers. They seemed to be able to think for themselves in attack.

Kelly of the Royal Scots did very fine work, but the Camerons simply broke and ran. (I don't blame them. RLM. 1972). Their H.Q. came down beside us. I managed to do good business, however, as I got one of their Lewis guns which they had cast aside, and a telephone, and added them to the Battalion store. We have about 4 Lewis guns now in addition to our normal establishment, and also a number of extra phones!

AND CARRIES ON

There was a lot of confusion all morning as the Boche bombardment was perfect. He burst everything and we never knew where his shots would land next. Everywhere our wires were burst. Our 'D' Coy. on the left, had a bad time, about 40 casualties. Their skipper did well - Billy Irvine - his men afterwards recommended him for his gallantry.

INTERESTING WORK

Our left flank was very weak and exposed, and I went along to have a look. Our fellows occupied their whole frontage to the Arras-Cambrai Road, which was exclusive to us. The Scottish Rifles should have been astride that road, but I had to go fully a quarter of a mile before I found them. Watched one of their companies leave for a counter-attack - poor devils. I felt glad that I wasn't in that little episode.

I found the Rifle's C.O. Stanley Clarke, pointed out the gap between our battalions and asked him to occupy his ground (Cheek!) as we wanted to keep in touch with him. All very interesting work. He was not much perturbed.

I walked back slowly in order to see them start but the blighters went about so much in the open that they brought the Boche guns down upon them, so I shifted my position a little!

We had 4 officer casualties - the C.O., Col. Jim Mitchell (wounded, died later), Capt. Wilson (Emma) a splendid fellow, Stewart and Christie, all wounded. Of the men, there were 80 casualties, including about a dozen killed. We got a number of cyclist R.E.s up at night to support us. They were a bit amusing. There were no reserves on our part of the front, behind us - except the Divisional General and his staff. I heard they were even roping in the Divisional Dustman from Arras!

The 44th. Bde. had a bad time. The 7th. Camerons had only 34 men left, so I heard, so our luck was in compared with that. The Boche got up to Bois de Boeufs, about 100 yards or more from our front line.

CHRISTIE'S WORK

Christie (who became a Church of Scotland Minister) ran a very good show. He went out, either alone or with a man, picked off every member of a Boche M.G. team, then got up, walked over to the gun, lifted it on his shoulders and came back with it. Very good it was, but the poor fellow got a very nasty head wound at night, from which he recovered very slowly later. This show of his was just alongside Bois de Boeufs.

Major G.L.Wilson came up at night to take over command, and we re-organised a bit, doing a bit of side slipping.

29th. We formed a thin chain of outposts along the Eastern edge of Bois de Boeufs. Very interesting work it was. Things were quietening down now, and I think Boche had shifted his reserves or else thought that we were holding the Arras front too strongly.

At the same time, his great attack was going on in the South, on the 5th. Army, and he was driving our fellows back every day. We, in the 3rd. Army, were just on the edge of this area, and the Boche movement pivoted on Arras. Hence as long as Arras was held he could not extend to the north since Vimy is easy to hold from the front, but difficult to hold from the Scarpe Valley direction. So I suppose the 15th. Division paid its way again at Arras!

30th. Still in line.

BREATHING SPACE!

31st. Also in line. It is all quite interesting to look back upon. The C.O. Major Wilson, is in good form. We had as usual to move fairly slickly once or twice on account of shells, but Fritz was, on the whole, very quiet. It seems to me that though his attack was perfect in its organisation and execution, Boche had gone wrong on one or two points (1) They had underestimated the strength of our resistance (2) They had overestimated the numbers of our reserves - we had no reserves. All three brigades were in line. There was nothing to support these three brigades except an odd cyclist battalion. If Boche had known that fact I'm sure he would have pushed until we were broken. As it was he merely pushed us back about 1 1/2 miles, but did not break up our formation, or break through.

April 1st. 1918. We came out of the line at night. Back to Arras. H.Q. in cellars in the Hotel de Ville, or Town Hall. Poor Arras! It is in a worse condition than ever before. All our new erections, Y.M.C.A., huts, transport lines, and canteens and officers club are no more. I salvaged a copy of Jones' "Life of R. Browning" from the wreckage of the Y.M.C.A. Library. Our quarters are damp, and they smell. There are also rats, and the place is dark. Some of the Tommies had had a good time. There has been a bit of looting of such wine cellars and estaminets as previous bombardments had left.

2nd. Walk out by Roclincourt with McElwee.

3rd. Busy in Orderly Room. Went to "Jolly Boys" Concert at night.

4th. April. Wet day. Had to go up the line to take over, but back to Arras at night. Up to H.Q. of Camerons and Gordons where I found my 'crook' (stick). Colonel Anderson had 'souvenired' it from my side, the boulder! Kept at the H.Q. until 2 a.m. on the 5th. Fed right up. Fell in shell hole. Lost my pipe and got covered all over with muck.

BOCHE RAID JIMMY ORR

5th. April. Enemy opened a heavy bombardment on the back of our outpost company astride the Arras-Cambrai Road. He also hit our rear areas. He attacked on a front of about 150 yards, but did not get nearer to us than 50 yards. 'B' Coy. were in the line in front, under Jimmy Orr, with Kerr and young McElwee. Attack easily repelled. There were three killed in 'B' Coy. and several wounded at Coy. H.Q. and in the other companies. Barrage pretty heavy in the rear areas, but our artillery opened up well.

Still the 5th. Out at night, laying wire. Got back tired, wet, hungry, fed up, late. Lost my way completely in utter Egyptian Darkness, the first time I have ever been lost. I walked hard with Stark across country, up and down shell holes, and through mud, and after half an hour's 'hard' landed back at the telegraph pole from which I had started. Got back somehow, had a good dinner and began to feel better. Jimmy Orr in this raid got a beautiful bullet hole in his helmet.

6th. Barging around all day and a good part of the night. Awful mud. A bit tired.

7th. More 'wind up' at 'Stand to', but it was a false alarm. Shifted H.Q. in afternoon to Devil's Wood. Busy, but got things going. Round line at night with Major Wilson. News of death from wounds of Col. Mitchell. Very grieved about it, for he was a fine, noble fellow. Had fearful cough and got little sleep.

8th. Nothing new. Relieved at night by 8/10th. Gordons. Reconnoitred the tunnels down to Arras, with several officers. They were interesting for the first 100 yards, but very boring after a mile or two, as I am rather tall for them.

9th. Back to the cellars.

10th. Easier day. Getting going again. Still 'standing to' at 5 a.m. Most damnable to have to do this when we need a rest. "Jolly Boys" at night.

11th. Work party in morning. Memorial service for Col. Mitchell in the caves. Fine summer day. Major Turner of Royal Scots to dinner at night. Boche took Bois de Boeufs from 55th. Division. Fancy!!!

12th. April. Route march with the company to Dainville in morning. Glorious day, blue skies, warm sun, mild breezes. Felt 'A.I.' and not at all warlike. In afternoon went along to a stagnant pond near the Scarpe Canal for a swim with Strathie. Enjoyed it immensely, although it is a bit early for bathing.

13th. Boche making great headway up North. A dry rot appears to have set in among some divisions. Tends to get disheartening as his gains are being obtained at small cost, as some of our fellows are not putting up the sort of fight they should. 4th. Division on our left has been taken out and sent up to Hazebrouek. Expect we will be out again soon, and sent up to another part of the line. It is all very feeding up. We don't mind fighting in the least provided others get a share! We go into line tonight to take over from the Seaforths. Left Arras at 9 p.m. and got up easily and quickly. Back in Devil's Wood again.

14th. - 18th. Usual routine of work in the line. Up late and early. Weather not so bad. Our part of the line is very interesting, and its defence, on account of Battery Valley which cuts it at an angle, is a bit of a problem. 'B' and 'C' Coys. in line till 17/18th. when 'A' and 'C' Coys. took their places. Rigged up pretty fair signalling by lamp from Coys. Lines O.K. and quite interesting.

RAID PREPARATIONS

17th. Battalion told to do a raid. Visited Canadians on our left. They are a rum lot!

19th. April. Very busy day. Round coys. in morning, fixing up for the raid. 'D' Coy. are to do it, with 2 officers and 20 men - to take and hold two battery positions one of which is known to contain three machine guns. Collected a lot of salvage wire for the show. Went to Canadians again after dinner.

Then went out on patrol with Billy Irvine - along a low bank in the valley to a shell hole some 50 yards from the position we are to take in the morning. Saw Hun party in front of us, digging.

So Billy went back for a Lewis gun, while I kept watch from the shell hole. Billy came back out again with a gun, and gave the Hun a good dose of stuff.

Went back and got Sergeant Mitchell. Together we laid a wire out to this shell hole, so that the signallers in the party would have to run out only some 50 yards of wire. Had signal stations stations all over the place. Simply a glorious night, one of the finest of my life. Went back to Bn. H.Q. at 3 a.m. for brekker and then went forward again.

THE RAID

The C.O. would not let me go forward with 'D' Coy. so I had to watch them from the front line. The boys went fine, and moved quickly to their objective, which was taken in three or four minutes. By the time our men had reached the gun pits there had been only machine gun fire, the enemy's barrage then began to fall, but it was not deadly.

Went to dugout in front line, to which I had a wire attached, and within a few minutes we were in telephonic communication with Irvine in the captured gun-pits. C.O. thus got right through to Irvine. Lieut. Robertson of 'A' Coy. wounded shortly afterwards in moving his line forward to keep touch with Irvine.

OUR MORALE VERY HIGH

Soon Irvine phoned to me to look out for a Boche M.G. which was worrying his men. I found it. It was firing from a bare area, with no distinctive features other than shell holes. I got a compass, marked the spot carefully, calculated the map reference, and wired through to our H.Q. to get the gunners to deal with it. In ten minutes or a little more a dozen shots landed exactly where I had seen the gun with its two men. One shot, I am sure, was a direct hit, for that gun never fired again during the day.

Lieut. Smith wounded. Billy Irvine took 31 men plus one officer, prisoners. We had only one or two slight casualties, except Lieut. Robinson who died. Back to H.Q. at 1 p.m. and began to feel a bit tired. Orders for relief by Seaforths to hand. Told to look after the guides for the relief. Left at 9 p.m. for the junction of Cemetery and St. Patrick's Lanes. Boche began to shell. Guides late. Seaforths arrived before time. Our S.O.S. went up at 10.06 p.m. and our guns began to reply at 10.10 p.m. I kept the Seaforths for a bit, as it looked like a counter attack on the captured gun pits, until 11.30 p.m. Went back to the Battalion at midnight instead of to a comfortable bed in Arras. At 12.30 a.m. sent up line.

THE COUNTER ATTACK

21st. With a carrying party with bombs. Heavy M.G. fire down Battery Valley. Nasty job. 'C' Coy., under Hood, had their right post raided. Lt. Stewart, a fine fellow, killed in going forward to take it back. McElwee sent forward. Lt. Brown of 'A' Coy. killed and Kerr of 'B' Coy. wounded. Little progress on Boche part, except for the one post. Our casualties were 15 killed and 20 wounded, including the five officers. Very expensive this, for a day's outing. Relief completed in hopeless confusion. Back to Bn. H.Q. at 3.30 a.m. Arras at 4.45 with Stark. Bed at 6 a.m. Really tired.

SLEEPING DIFFICULTIES

Wakened at 9 a.m. and told to go back again up the line to show G.O.C. 44th. Brigade round the line and to explain to him the situation. Went round the bloody line with him. Back at 2 p.m. - damned tired. Had some sandwiches and went to bed.

Capt. Cook, meanwhile, went for a tub bath in the next room. We were located in a house in the town. Cook made a noise bathing and kept me from sleeping. Then a shell burst in the courtyard of our house, and another in the next courtyard. To crown all, another shell knocked over the chimney of our house, above Cook's room. We were on the top floor, and bits of mud and plaster fell on him in his bath. Gave up the sleep business in disgust. Rose and laughed at Cook and cleaned myself 3.30 p.m. By 6 p.m. we were on the march to Asnez-les-Duisans. Got there by 8.30 p.m. Not damned tired. But bloody tired! Dinner. Bed at midnight. Slept till 8 a.m. Tired still.

22nd. I had scarcely any rest or sleep for a week. Indents taken on parade. This was the date for the Divisional band to come and play to our battalion. It played "This is the End of a Perfect Day" or whatever it is, and I prayed that I would never see a day that was imperfect.

While we were at dinner word came for us to be ready to embus in the morning "for God knows where"!!! Wet night. Bombardment somewhere. Went to bed early at 10 p.m.

23rd. April, 1918. What an anniversary! I remember this time last year. Rose at 3 a.m. and dealt with orders from Brigade till 6 a.m. Pretty tired still. Battalion embussed at 9 a.m. at Larisset for Marles-les-Mines. Did the embussing myself. Have got completely fed up with McClure, our second in command. He is an impertinent devil.

WE MOVE NORTH

Motored up with Prosser in column of 130 lorries through very nice country - Arg, Estré, Conché, Houdain, Marles to billets in Lozinghem (and very comfortable too!). We are in mining country now, quite different from the South and more densely populated. Wonder what is going to happen to the old Division now. Nothing good, I expect. Fixed up in billet with very obliging people. Bed at 10 p.m.

24th. Good sleep. Checked signal stores in morning. Superintended football at night. Dined at night with 'B' Coy.

25th. Visited Marles-les-Mines and Auchel, on horses, with Fred McElwee. He is not much of a rider. The Division is now in reserve to the Army, to be pushed in at any old spot. We are having a pretty fair time now. Weather not at all bad. We are very short of officers.

KNOCKING ABOUT

27th. Went up in an aeroplane in the afternoon, an F.E. 8., with J.C.Irvine, who was with me in 13th. Argylls at home. He is just out to France! Wore my kilt for the 20 minutes flight, in an open cockpit. A glorious experience and it seemed more like 20 seconds. Not worried by the height, and did not feel dizzy. Irvine to dinner at night. Heard of the death of John McIntosh. It is terribly sad for them all.

Sunday 28th. April. Old Sorley has gone home. The poor chap well deserves a rest. He has done more than an ordinary man's share of the fighting and of the dirty work. In afternoon rode out with Prosser and Orr via Fleringhems and Permes to Tangry where we had omelettes in the house we had been billeted in during our march north to Ypres last year. The good lady said she remembered me, but I am sure she did not.

"KNOCKED ABOUT"

Monday 29th. April. 1918. Wakened up after midnight by orders for a move in the morning to Arras. I was put in charge of the advance party and left at 7 a.m. for Marles where we got two buses to take a party of 20 officers and 40 men of our division. Although I was one of the last to arrive I managed to 'snag' a place in front, before all the others. A rare morning.

Proceeded in the usual way to the vicinity of Acq and of Mont St. Eloi where we reached H.Q. of the division we were to relieve. Our arrival there was the first intimation they had of their impending relief!! Ye Gods! The Staff must have been drunk last night.

For sheer, downright-go-as-you-please give me the staff of the British Army. They are the limit. Here was the whole of the 15th. Scottish Division, transport, artillery, ambulances and men half way on the road to relieve another division who didn't know they were to be relieved! So we 'about turned' and came back to our billets in Lozinghem.

VERILY WE ARE THE PEOPLE!

Have the idea just now that our intelligence staff haven't the foggiest idea where the Boche has concentrated, or where he intends to attack. Cycled to Lillers in afternoon. Found the place utterly deserted. Tea in Auchel.

30th. Brigade Major dined with us. We pulled his leg a bit, accusing him of being in love. Football in afternoon.

WE MOVE SOUTH AGAIN

May 1st. 1918. Battalion in training in Bois de Dames, near Lapugnoy. Got signallers going fairly well. Finished Stephen McKenna's "96 Hours Leave".

2nd. Word came for us to move South to Arras on 3rd. Felt very sorry. Dined at R.A.F. mess with Irvine.

3rd. Train at Calong-Riquart to Acq from which latter place we had a somewhat wearying march to Arras. Roads dusty. Difficulty getting into mess owing to the Scottish Rifles being billeted there.

4th. Knocking about all morning. Went up line in afternoon for a look round. Tea with the Canadians. We take over from 16th. Bn. 1st. Canadian Division. They look good fellows. Cook going to be O.C. 'B' Coy. - Lord help 'B' Coy! McClure going up in command, as C.O. is taking a rest. Easy day on the whole. Expect resumption of Boche offensive in a day or two.

WE RELIEVE CANADIANS

5th. Rain and heavy firing during the night. Took things easy all day. Moved off at 8.20 p.m. to relieve Canadians in Chanticleer Sector. Good relief for H.Q. Coy. but late for the coys, owing to trains, of course.

6th. May 1918. 'Stand-to' at 4 a.m. Round forward companies in the morning, going over the lines. Easy time for remainder of the day.

A BAD RELIEF

7th. Tuesday. Rather tiring walk over the area we have to go to tonight. We only got a warning order. The executive order came at 8.55 p.m. and we had only time to read it, write our operations order, send out to companies, and get them to act upon it at 9 p.m. AND Corps H.Q. being only a mile away! Thank God we had a certain amount of foresight. Night very dark and rain falling heavily. We have to take over from 10th. Scottish Rifles, and 13th. Royal Scots. There is a mile or two of open ground, devoid of all landmarks, and criss-crossed by thousands of trenches. Our whole battalion lost its way.

I left old Bn. H.Q. at 10.45 p.m. and got to the new H.Q. at 3 a.m. Poor little Hurrell, after wandering about along a trench called Effie Trench for two hours, was overheard saying to himself, from the depths of the trench "Well, I'll be damned, if I ever have a daughter, if I call her Effie." (This was the occasion when, in this darkness, one of our senior officers coming along the top of a trench stuffed with blaspheming troops shouted out "What's all the delay?" and from exactly below him came the reply "Cafe au lait! Cafe au lait! You bugger!". RLM)

8th. Slept from 4 a.m. till 10 a.m. Very muddy and tired but not fed up. Encountered the Brigadier and the G.O.C. Divn. outside my dugout. I was in shirt sleeves, minus tin helmet, box-respirator, and everything else, but I gave them such a cheerful "Good Morning" that they quite forgot to tick me off! Went round line in morning, knee deep in water. Back for lunch at 3 p.m., covered all over with muck, but not at all displeased with life. We might be worse off! Reconnoitring for new H.Q. in the evening. Laid a wire to our O.P. at night.

9/10th. Usual trench life. 'Wind up' on 9/10th. as Staff expected an attack. Tea with 'C' Coy. on 10th. McClure doing damned badly as C.O. and fast losing the respect of the officers. (RLM. Oct. 1972. I had quite forgotten about McClure. Perhaps I should not have written about him, but I must have felt very badly at the time about it. To erase it?). He was particularly drunk on the 10th.

11th. May. C.O. didn't rise until 12.30 p.m. Fed up with him. Being relieved by 6th. Camerons tonight. Round line as usual. Got back to cutting at midnight. Buzzing around until 4 or 5 a.m.

12th. Major Wilson now promoted Lieut. Colonel. Thank God! He is a magnificent fellow, a splendid gentleman and a born soldier. We are back in Brigade Reserve in Railway Embankment.

15th. Finding out all the troubles of a Mess President in H.Q. Mess. Out with 'B' Coy. officers for a swim in the morning.

16th. Royal Scots raided and took three prisoners.

AMALGAMATION DECIDED ON

Official Information received yesterday states that the 11th. Bn. Argylls is to be absorbed by the 1st/8th. Bn. Argylls who are in the 51st. Division. Everyone terribly angry. "H.Q. Officers have to go to 39th. Division, remainder, surplus to base". Think I will transfer, myself. Awful lot of swearing being done these days.

This seems a most foolish move on the part of the G.H.Q. It will completely destroy the esprit de battalion of a good mob. Several other amalgamations going on too, e.g. 4/5th. Black Watch to absorb the 9th. Black Watch, and the 6th. Camerons absorbing the 7th. Camerons.

16th. Camped at Roclincourt. Swimming again.

17th. Did not do much. G.O.C. Division paid us a visit. He explained that owing to the difficulty of re-enforcing all the Scottish units, some, like our own, are to be broken up. Rumour that we are to train Americans. (British Brigades would now consist of three instead of four battalions) Glorious weather these days.

18th. Took a work party to forward area at night. Went by train! Back at 4 a.m. on 19th.

THE VIMY RIDGE

20th. Rode up to top of Vimy Ridge on "Black Nan". Had ticklish time passing our batteries which were in action along the road, as "Black Nan" got very nervous. Left horses near Canadian Monument, and went on until we saw the other side. View glorious. Simply grand - the woods around Lievin, Lens in ruins, and being shelled continuously, the grey embankment of La Coulette, the Lens-Arras Road, the brick heaps at Petit-Vimy, the railway station at Vimy, the railway, Mericourt, Acheville, Drocourt, Rouvey, Bois Bernard, Fresnoy, Arleux, Willuval, Harvus and Vitry. I have never seen a view such as this before! A complete thrill!

TWO FAREWELL DINNERS

The Farewell Dinner of the 11th. Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders at 8 p.m. 30 at Dinner, speeches, songs, stories. Who was drunk and who wasn't? Bed at 1 a.m. Out with Signallers, H.Q. Coy. won the cleaning up competition, 5 francs per man. Up to Bois de Maison Blanche at night. Wonderful show. Enjoyed myself at "Balmorals" at night. Jove! Scotsmen are the people! Heavy bombardment of Roclincourt in morning. Heavy artillery at night.

'B' Coy. had 10 bottles and 'D' Coy. 2 bottles of whisky stolen last night.

22nd. May. General Allgood and Brigade Major to dinner. The G.O.C. is going home for a rest. Very sorry as he is a popular and efficient commander. O.C. Coys present. Fine dinner for the line! "The Cabby" (G.O.C.) very cut up at leaving. I think he always seemed to 'draw' to our battalion. Bed late.

TRENCH LIFE AS USUAL

24th. Into line at night. Shelled slightly on road up. H.Q. in Cam Valley. Battalion along left bank of Scarpe Canal. Laid wires to forward H.Q. of 'C' Coy., then took walk round the line, which runs through Fampoux. Back to H.Q. at 3.30 a.m. "No Man's Land" here is very strange, in one place it is a canal, in another it is a ruined village, while just next it is of the normal kind.

25th. Stirton, my favourite signaller wounded. He was a fireman on a locomotive at home. He is the toughest, dirtiest little devil I've ever met, but with a heart of gold.

THINGS LIVEN UP A LITTLE

26th. Hun guns very active, all calibres strafing all over our areas. It looks very like a covering for a demonstration elsewhere. Cam Avenue got a bad hammering. My lines burst everywhere, but kept going by the linesmen who are fine lads. At night we laid a line by a different route to forward coys. in Fampoux. Held up for an hour in Fampoux by trench mortar and grenade strafing. We had about 5 men killed and about 20 wounded. Then we were nearly gassed at night.

27th. Back at 2.30 p.m. knocked about in afternoon. Had to stay in at night. Hell of a row at intervals. S.O.S. at 12.50 away to right. C.O. and Macleod round line. Bn. H.Q. getting a good share of the row. Wrote letters.

28th. Wire in to say that Boche's second offensive has opened in two places, one North and one South of us. In the midst of this, they, G.H.Q., propose absorbing us! Lively night, but uncomfortable. Very busy after midnight phoning Brigade, Artillery and Coys. This is a perfect life!

29th. Slept from 3 till 8 a.m. Heavy bombardment opened at 10.30 a.m. all over our area. Was out on the lines from noon till 3 p.m. with Sgt. Mitchell. We got put through it near Cam Avenue. I object to a shell bursting three yards from me, one on each side. They were gas shells, fortunately. Mitchell didn't seem to mind. Hell of a mess-up around our test boxes. Had nothing to do in afternoon, so went to the nearby artillery and fired a dozen rounds from an 18 pounder gun. General to dinner at night.

29th. Rose at 10 a.m. Tired. Read a novel. Out at night. Round coys. and back at 2 a.m.

30th. Easy day. Quiet. News from South very bad. Laid more wires. Nearly got it in the neck from M.G. fire as bullets were spurting up the ground all round us while mending 'C' Coy's lines at Dingwall Trench.

31st. Practised revolver shooting. Black Watch on our left carried out a raid, but did not get any prisoners. Trenches empty! Good policy!

JUNE 1918

1st. June 1918. Took life easy. Revolver practice. Word to effect that 1/8th. Argylls are arriving tomorrow. Good thing they have come at last. Wonder what will happen. Am really not caring very much now. One loses interest when one's friends are taken away in this manner. Relieved at night by 13th. Royal Scots. Proceeded to Stirling Camp in support.

2nd. June. Wakened at 2 a.m. by gas shells falling in and around the camp. Had to wear respirators for an hour. Took over Macleod's job, temporarily, as Adjutant, while he went with the C.O. to 'details' to fix up matters with the 1st/8th. Argylls. Noisy night with us.

3rd. June. Cold day. Not much doing. Swimming in Blangy Lake with Tobermory Maclean and Brownjohn, the Bde. Signals officer. Usual work parties. Less 'bumph' in from Brigade. They must be busy with amalgamations.

CONFERENCES

4th. Conference with G.O.C.s Division and Brigade and O.C.s 11th. and 8th. Argylls to settle the question. Wonder how things will go.

5th. to 8th. Carried on as adjutant in the line. Had a fine time as Bde. were not worrying us much with 'bumph'. Round line occasionally and went for a swim in Blangy Lake. Preparations for forming the new 8th. Argylls. Hood and Prosser left on the 7th. to go to 39th. Division to train Americans.

Incident of the seventh of the eight new Seaforth Officers! (I cannot recollect about this RLM. 1972)

8th. June 11 p.m. About 6 officers and 24 men of the Royal Scots blew up on us as an advance party, and pretty nearly swamped us. Got them fixed up, however.

9th. Bombardment for Cameron's patrol. 2 a.m. to 2.30 a.m. Boche raid near "The Snout", an old advanced coy. H.Q. near Camel Cross Roads. Heavy artillery strafe on both sides till 3.30 a.m. Then gas drifted over on to us 3.30 to 4.30 a.m. Heavy strafe near the embankment. About 400 shells, 5.9" and 8 inch, fell in half an hour at 8.30 a.m. Fine easy day. Relieved at night by 9th. R.S.F.

10th. Back to Wakefield Camp at 2 a.m. and bed at 3 a.m.

AND HERE ENDS THE HISTORY OF THE 11th. SERVICE BATTALION OF THE ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS. 10th. JUNE, 1918.

DIARY WHILE SERVING WITH THE 1st/8th. (T.F.) BN. ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS.

10th. June, 1918. Lieut. Colonel G.L.Wilson is to command the new Battalion. That is the G.O.C. Division's choice. About 2 p.m. nearly 400 of the 11th. Bn. Argylls set out for 'details' camp in order to make room for an equal number of the 1st/8th. who were remaining to form the new battalion. It was terribly sad to see fellows - old 11th. men with whom one had been so long associated, marching away from us. Poor old Sergeant Donachie, who had cooked practically every meal which the battalion had ever had, was particularly cut up. Capt. McIntosh, who used to be in the 13th. Bn. has now arrived. We will see what he can do.

About 4 p.m. the 1st/8th. began to roll up. The C.O., Colonel Wilson, made the remaining old 11th. fall in on the ranks of the 1st/8th. to show the new arrivals, that from now on, the Battalion was 8th. ARGYLLS, and that the old 11th. was dead. A fine, understanding gesture. It was a splendid gesture, and well worthy of the man, for it showed that he, at any rate, was burying prejudices and accepting the situation.

The 1st/8th. men look good and fit. Most of the officers, however, are new to the 1st/8th., and new to France, though there are a number of senior lieutenants some of whom have a great deal of hard service to their credit. Don't know how I will stand for seniority amongst them.

SETTLING DOWN

11th. June. Getting settled down. Up line in afternoon, reconnoitring with new officers.

12th. Knocking around, cleaning up. Amalgamation is a complicated proceeding. Am quite pleased at the moment to be staying on in the line.

13th. Took signallers up to Vimy Ridge for map reading. In evening had a grand ride to Maroeuil with O.C.s Coys. to Counter Battery Office there. Rode all out. Champagne afterwards. Met Robertson, late 13th. Bn. Signallers. A good ride, home at the gallop. Sing-song at night.

14th. Signals in the morning. Work with contact aeroplane. Aeroplane late as usual. Things are working very smoothly just now in the battalion. All ranks pulling together, and there have been no quarrels or fights such as the Black Watch - not altogether without cause - had on their amalgamation. Expect we will have a very good battalion ere long. It is rather difficult to catch and keep up the 8th. spirit, for, after all, my heart was with the 11th.

15th. General inspection. Rode to Vimy Ridge near Souchy and Givenchy with Capt. Pollock (later at the University with me). Wonderful view again. Dined with 'C' Coy.

16th. Church. I stayed in camp in the afternoon as O.C. Bn. as the C.O. and O.C.s Coys. were all out reconnoitring.

17th. Up the line again at night. Had heavy weights to carry. Relief not complete until 1.30 a.m.

18th. Round the line. Busy.

TAKE TRENCH FEVER

19th. Busy day. About 2 or 3 p.m. going round the front line as usual, I began to feel wobbly all over and it was only with the greatest difficulty I could get back to H.Q. Went into the beastly dugout where we slept. Did without meals. Got sick. Then a temperature. I had to go down the line next night, absolutely and completely limp and useless. Trench fever. For the first time, I couldn't see any humour in life. Could scarcely get down as far as the dressing station. Have never experienced such complete weakness before. Got into an ambulance.

21st. Wretched journey to 33rd. Casualty Clearing Station at Ligny, near St. Pol. Heavy rain. Arrived late, and after passing through what seemed dozens of receiving and other rooms, and turning and tripping over hundreds of duckboards at last reached a tent or ward where we were to be put up.

About 2 a.m. with the arrival of two nursing sisters, though still very tired and far from well, and with a temperature well over 100, I began to see the humour of it. From that time began to get better. Got into bed somehow.

22nd. Tried stout for lunch. At 10 p.m. had stout and strawberries and cream given me (after it was dark) by two of the sisters. God bless them! "P.U.O." seems rather a good illness. (Pyrexia of unknown origin, an army classification). There are 12,000 cases of it just now in the First Army. Very cheery, but terribly weak in the back. Read some novels. McDougall of the 1st/8th. is in the bed next to mine. R.K. Drummond of the Camerons is in the bed opposite. Hospital crowded out.

23rd. and 24th. Up each day for an hour.

25th. Up all afternoon. Good day. My pins still wobbly.

26th. Went to St. Pol for an hour. Am beginning to pull round.

27th. Fed up with doing nothing, want to get back to the battalion.

28th. Motored to Avesnes and Augibny.

29th. Went to Le Quesnoy where the 11th. rested last year before going into the line at Ypres Salient. Revisited my old billet. Found that the curé had died. Motored back. Met manager of one of the mines at Mazingarbe. Got into his car. He appeared decent but I loathe foreigners.

Soissons 1918

MEET DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

30th. Visit to hospital by Duke of Connaught. I was sitting outside the tent reading when he came up and spoke to me. The last time I saw him was in 1908 or 1909, when, on the occasion of his unveiling a South African War Memorial to the Scottish Rifles, in Kelvingrove Park, I ran away from school, and climbed a lamp-post in order to see over the heads of the soldiers on parade.

I sent for my batman (Wright) and told him to get my valise and meet me at a certain road junction nearby. I then discharged myself quietly from the C.C.S. We rejoined the Battalion 'details' at Verdun Camp, Agnez. Glad to get back, but am certainly not fit. Was warmly welcomed. However, this place is better than the C.C.S. Glorious weather.

1st - 3rd. July 1918. Quiet life at 'details'. Bn. came out of the line about 3 a.m. on night of 3/4th.

THE CANADIANS' SPORTS

6th. Rose early, like Job, and proceeded to Tincques with our pipe band, to take part in the sports of the Canadian Highland Brigade. A great show and a grand day. Saw Currie, the G.O.C. Canadian Corps, with a little French girl.

Spoke for 5 minutes with Gen. MacDonnell, the G.O.C. 1st. Canadian Division, who was disappointed that I hadn't the Gaelic. He advised me to get up enough of the tongue to pass St. Peter at the Gate. He seemed a good fellow.

Our band came out second. Usual events, dancing, tug-of-war, etc. Tossing the caber - this was brought on to the field by four men! There was a funny mule race. The staff were well represented. Met A.G.Cameron. Met lots of 16th. Canadian Bn. whom we relieved some six weeks ago. They gave us of their hospitality - they had engaged a special 'estaminet' for this show. Aubigny for dinner. A merry party. Cangicks were there. Orr, McAinsh, Forrester, McElwee, Elliott. Difficulty in getting some of them home. A really good day. Major Moir (Bobby) is leaving us to command 5th. Seaforths.

7th. Very hot. Church. Played "Vingt et un" at night. Won 16 francs.

AEROPLANE SIGNALLING

8th. Out with my signallers. Contact aeroplane work. The machine acknowledged all our signals, but got into an awful mess with them, and dropped an indecipherable message at Brigade H.Q. This, by some error, was sent on to Division, who at once got the wind up and wired to us.

10th. Very nice quiet life so far as the war is concerned. Boche shells the road on which we live, but fortunately his shells land a little to our north.

12th. Left Wakefield Camp at 9 p.m., and got, after a rather tiring march, to Marqueffles Farm Camp, near Bouvigny, about 3 a.m. on the 13th. Men in fine spirits. Slept till noon.

14th. Church. In afternoon rode with McIntosh through Noulette and over the Ridge at Notre Dame de Lorette. The old French trenches still exist there, and we had considerable difficulty in getting the ponies over them. Glorious view from the top. Could see the Tower of Wingles, near Loos. Conference at Bde. H.Q. Chateau de la Haie, for sports for the men.

OFF TO THE SOUTH!

15th. The maps issued yesterday were suddenly withdrawn today. Sure sign of a shift. Confirmed later. Frantic preparations at night for a move to the South. Thousands of orders coming in, accompanying or followed by thousands of cancellations. Hopeless situation. Shows up the staff in a bad light. All preparations show that we will soon be in action - with the French Army - and perhaps at VERDUN! Men in glorious trim. I'm sure we will do well there, and I am glad it is out of the British line - if only for a change of venue.

14th. Very warm night. Rain, thunder and lightning. More orders and counter orders. We leave at 4.45 p.m. Will be going into action with the signallers - delighted - hope there are no trenches and that we get open warfare.

Heavy march in evening to Aubigny, where we arrived at 8.30 p.m. Entrained at 9.30 p.m. and left at midnight, as we thought, for the vicinity of Paris. Slept fitfully en route. Reached Amiens in early morning. Saw the broken Cathedral Tower.

We passed it by on the West side. Halted at Romascamps for half an hour, where we had breakfast, lunch and tea combined. Then on to Beauvais. 3 p.m. where our instructions were changed again, and we were ordered to get out at Liancourt-Ratigny. Interesting march through the village whose inhabitants had never seen Highlanders before (Just fancy!). Jove, how our band played to them! The pipers nearly bust!

THE CHATEAU OF BETHENCOURT

Marched to Bethencourt where H.Q. and two coys. were fixed. Very pretty country. Had to do billeting on my arrival. Got fixed up myself in a beautiful chateau and with very nice people too.

18th. For some unaccountable reason my watch went two hours fast in the night. So when I found myself awake at what appeared 7.30 a.m. I got up. Went down to the little pool in the grounds - an idyllic spot - the kind I have always associated with fairies - and plunged headlong into it. Reached the house via the strawberry bushes. Bathed again at midnight with Flind. Great fun. Macleod came out in a boat, and we almost succeeded in pulling him in. As soon as we came out of the pond, (1 a.m. on 19th.) we got word that the Battalion was to move at 5 a.m. Damn! Went to bed. Rose at 4 a.m. No breakfast. Bn. moved to embus at Bethencourt by 5 a.m. Good work. Not a man late. French embussing methods very fine - Moved via Clermont, along Compeigne Road, crossed River Oise, Arsy-Elincourt, Pierre-Font to Haute-Fontaine where we debussed at 2 p.m. I never want to see a bus again! My liver and spinal column severely tested by eight hours continuous jolting. Had hell of a headache.

NEW COUNTRY

Met many French and American wounded coming down. French Red Cross arrangements poor compared with ours. Wounded in good spirits. French seemed pleased to see us. This part of the country has not suffered much, and apparently there has never been any great concentration of troops in it. We are the first Scottish troops to come to the district.

Saw about 2,000 Boche prisoners coming down - a mixed lot. Many boys amongst them, but also a fair number of older men. They all looked dour, glum and fed-up. A few had exceedingly ugly faces. People in the villages delighted to see us. Great welcome. Villages cleaner than up north. Many delightful woods and hills - but fighting in them would be difficult. And marching hard. No dirty ponds to be seen. Fields beautifully kept. Can't understand how the French manage to look after them. The French soldiers we met appeared clean, active and useful. They all looked happy.

Got awfully hungry en route. Bus broke down several times. No shop to be seen. Bought some tomatoes for ten francs, of which my share after distribution amounted to two. Saw some Italians, a lousy looking mob! After debussing we walked downhill in glorious country. Rested for an hour near Orva and bivouaced amongst the trees. Dinner consisted of 'bully' and potatoes which we dug along the roadside. Slept comfortably under a tree until 8 a.m. Cold, but not a bad night. Am enjoying myself. 20th. Lazed about in morning as we are at half an hour's notice. Short walk with men to top of a hill in afternoon.

They are in splendid form in spite of heat which is intense. Each cooks his own food, finds his own vegetables etc. as our transport folk are not yet with us. In H.Q. we had 'souvenired' potatoes, carrots, rhubarb and turnips in one meal. Mosquitoes bad.

B-----ED ABOUT!

Ordered to move at 6 p.m. Orders changed to 9 p.m. probably because Boche would see us crossing the ridge in daylight. I questioned if they would have seen us, but the staff might have thought it out earlier. Move put off till 3 a.m. on the 21st. Heavy rain began at 10 p.m. so we had a thorough soaking to prepare us for the 3 a.m. march. Move changed to 4.20 a.m. Changed again to 6 p.m.

Finally moved at 8 p.m. through Montigny, out on to main road and up until we came to the top of the ridge at the bottom of which lies the village of Coeuvres. The road winds tortuously down into the village, the houses of which seemed, big, bright and then shadowy in the moonlight. It was a glorious night. Marching was easy and peaceful, and the roads empty except for our columns. The whole division was on the march, and our own battalion was leading.

MIDNIGHT BOMBING - A NEW EXPERIENCE AT COEUVRES

Just as the head of the column was clearing the village, and my lot were still in it, we heard an aeroplane above. We saw it next, big, black and flying very low. In an instant from seeing it, it had dropped a bomb just to the left rear of H.Q. Coy. which I was with. Hell of a noise. The effect on many would have been most demoralising, but our ranks kept absolutely steady. The men didn't even quicken their pace.

The plane, like a black bird of prey, in the moonlight, turned and began flying back again along the road to meet us. I watched it coming - very slowly it seemed until it was right exactly over my head. Then I stopped looking up, and simply walked on for 5 seconds, at the end of which there was a hell of a crash, and a series of eight terrific explosions took place just in our rear about 100 yards along the road - so we kept on marching. Men came along alright, tho' a bit fed up.

The battalion was halted clear of the village. Lieut. Moffat was wounded badly. Sgt. Kinsells and three others killed and some 20 or so of the men wounded. Rotten luck. Don't like bombing. Lord knows what it must be like on the other side of the line, for our chaps do far more night bombing than the Boche.

So we continued our march along a low dark road, for the moon was now hidden, below St. Pierre Aigle and then along between a river and a high wood which we entered, 3/4 mile short of Vertefeuille Farm, where we bivouacked for the night. Felt tired and rather rotten. Had a cold in the head. Our destination had been changed at the last moment.

I should have mentioned that it was Lieut. A.S. Miller whose company caught most of the bombs, and from what I learned later, Sandy Miller behaved like the little gentleman he was.

RELIEVING THE AMERICANS AND FRENCH

Have been much impressed on these marches by the salutes and greetings of the American and French soldiers. The former were fascinated by our bag-pipes. Lord! How we held our heads up high and stepped out when THEY were watching, just to show them that we - WE - were winning the war - and then the Americans would fall behind - and we would carry on for another ten bloody miles without speaking.

22nd. July. 1918. Advance parties sent off early to 1st. Brigade. 1st. U.S.A. Division. C.O. away all day. He returned at 4.30 p.m. and immediately called a conference of officers for instructions. There is to be a push forward on both sides of Berzy-le-Sec, and we are to put out patrols to keep touch with the flanks. These patrols are to cross the River Crise, and the Railway Embankment and push on to the village of Noyant which lies on a steep hill just east of Berzy. H.Q. to be of a moving nature.

Visual signalling alone to be employed. 'B' and 'D' Coys. in front. 'A' in support and 'C' in rear. This is how it worked out.

THE RELIEF

The Bde. and Bn. H.Q.'s. boundaries were as shown on the map (Map 12 of Buchan's History). Our 'B' Coy. on left should have included the whole village of Berzy while 'D' Coy. was to occupy the curved upper half of the steep bank South of the Village. We were to relieve French troops.

Scarcely saw a Frenchman to relieve. Information re. ground, there was none: A French O.C. coy. met one of our forward coys. and standing still, in the darkness, pointed: "Mitrailleuse l^, et l^, et l^. Boche l^. Moi. Je vais". And he went.

DARKNESS

No other information was given over; no posts indicated or relieved. They had all relieved themselves before our men arrived, without guides, and for the most part without maps. As a result one of our platoons walked onto the top of a Boche post who immediately opened fire upon them. Doubtless they saw the kilts, and then spotting the relief, a tremendous bombardment of artillery and M.G. fire began to sweep the ridge over which our troops were coming. Our movement forward began shortly after the post incident, and carried on continuously thereafter, greatly increasing our casualties. The men of the front coys. had arrived near the front line about or shortly after midnight - but no "relief complete" messages came from either front company. Things went quiet at midnight and the men appeared in very good fettle until the relief was discovered.

I have never found out exactly how the time was spent during the bombardment prior to the advance by the two front coys. 'B' and D. I know that because of the lack of shelter we suffered many casualties - 30 or more dead - at the bend in the bank S.W. of Berzy. These casualties I saw myself.

BERZY

Meanwhile, lack of proper information and more still, the absence of "handing over", plus the continued shelling and casualties prevented our forward companies taking up their proper position or alignment. They had to move about in the half light on an exposed sky line, easily seen by Boche, and without even a trench for shelter. We got word that the show was to start at 5 a.m. At 4 a.m. the Boche guns were working our back areas in addition to the front. As soon as we got operation orders from Bde. H.Q. we got our own orders ready, and issued without a moment's loss of time. These were sent out to coys. at 4 a.m. Zero was 5 a.m. Thus there was scarcely time for the orders to reach coys. The runners did not know the way - as none had come back from the front coys. 'B' and 'D' to report relief complete.

THE BALL OPENS AND TURNS OUT BADLY

To complicate matters I heard that the French on our left have not to move at all. As a matter of fact, flanking communication was not made on the left until I made it myself in the afternoon with a French post at the extreme North end of Berzy. Operation orders did not reach both front coys. - but only one, I think. I came across Kinniemont, one of my best runners, lying dead on the road up, near Berzy, and I think he bore one copy.

He lay with some others near the cemetery. 'C' Coy. in reserve, lay all day in line, and suffered few or no casualties, although firing was brisk.

A bombardment of sorts - provided by guns of the 1st. U.S.A. Division, was opened at 5 a.m. Those in front told me afterwards that they didn't or couldn't see it - it was useless!

At 5.30 a.m. I got permission from the Colonel to go to 'C' Coy. to fix visual signalling. On the road up, I intercepted a message from 'A' Coy. to the effect that they had withdrawn a little, and that 'B' and 'D' Coys. had heavy casualties. So I let 'C' Coy's visual signals go to blazes, and went up to 'A' Coy.

I found 'A' Coy's men scattered in holes or on the grass in very open, exposed country, on hillside sloping down towards Boche, i.e. on the sky line without a bit of cover. They had taken up a position about 100 yards forward, but had come back a bit to avoid shell fire. It was very unhealthy, even while I was there, and poor McIntosh - it was his first show - was in an anxious state. He knew nothing about 'B' and 'D' Coys. I went forward near the upper edge of the wooded ridge but saw no traces of 'B' or 'D'. Absolutely no movement, either on the ridge or below it. Got some more information and went back to H.Q. The Colonel then went forward with Flind (later a psychiatrist!). The latter was wounded. The C.O. returned. He had gone to 'C' Coy.

OFF ON PATROL

About 11.15 a.m. I went out again, taking Corporal Langridge with me. My orders were to establish, if possible, a bridge head over the Crise River, on the Eastern side of the Railway, and to collect information, and to help things on. As soon as Langridge and I got to the top of the ridge we were machine gunned at long range, so there was nothing for it - some of the shots were very near - but to bolt in the direction of the firing which was coming from the Sucrierie. This we did in a slightly zig-zag course until we reached lower ground when the firing became more intense. So we lay down in a shell hole to consider the situation. I had not met a single Argyll of 'A' or 'B' or 'D' Coys. on this journey.

'A' Coy. by this time, with McIntosh and several others killed, had fallen back north west about 200 yards to some very slight cuttings or banks which gave some degree of shelter from the machine gun fire. I noted 'A' Coy's disappearance, but thought at the time that they had gone forward (and might be in front of us).

'B' and 'D' were non-existent, and there was not a 'B' or 'D' casualty to be seen on the ridge or on the ground below on the right half of the battalion front. From what I had heard, our front line as it had been "handed over" ran from Berzy (inclusive) S.W. to the corner of the steep ridge, and then S.E. along the front of the ridge in the direction of L'Etang.

I watched the areas being shelled by the Boche, and concluded he had given up the ground West of the Railway. So with Langridge I worked along until I came into the Cameron's area at the very S.E. corner of the ridge, got down, turned, and came back as towards Berzy at the foot of the ridge, on level ground. Not a single casualty, or sign of life could I see. The whole southern half was untenanted.

We therefore made a bolt across the open for the little wood S.E. of Berzy village - and searched it, its edges, and its centre. Found no one. Then I decided to work over to the Railway Embankment which was some 200 yards further on. As we were moving over, I saw the first sign of life - a small post of Camerons - 2 - 3 of them, holding a part of the embankment 200 yards south of the river. They told us we were the first Argylls they had seen. By this time I was sure that our fellows must be behind in Berzy or else had lost their direction of advance, and gone through the village in a North-East direction. Langridge and I therefore worked our way along the Railway, northwards. Boche was quieter now, although he machine gunned the top of the Railway Embankment from time to time, as from the Sucrerie.

We entered an orchard near the crossing of the road and railway, and I filled my pockets with peapods. I then searched a house nearby. Then we spotted some Camerons across the road alongside the Railway, and one or two dead Camerons in the road. They had been shot from under the railway bridge. Therefore we made a detour back and crossed the road at a point hidden from enemy view, came up again to the Railway and found Pat Fraser of the Camerons. His position was well inside our battalion area, and yet he had not seen an Argyll! I got some information from him about his own battalion, the 6th. His was the left hand flank post of the 6th.

I then went a bit north towards the station which contained a number of broken wagons. I did not enter, but the place was quite untenanted, apparently. I therefore came back and worked up the roads behind but parallel to the Crise. Found a dead horse and nothing else. (Apparently I did not feel like "establishing a bridgehead across the river Crise" with only one corporal, even although he was a good one, beside me! RLM 1972.)

I then determined to climb the hill on which Berzy stood, and which, while still receiving attention, was moderately quiet compared to what it had been in the morning. I came back to it and approached it from the road leading from Noyant - a very steep road - and entered the village. It was still being shelled, and the streets were piled high with masonry which I had to clamber over. I searched the front edge of it, and found a post of two or three Frenchmen at the North East corner. They told me that some French and Scots were behind in the Village, but where they did not know. They did not know who was in front, or on their flanks. So therefore there was a thousand yards gap between Pat Fraser and this post! (and incidentally some 600 or more yards between Pat Fraser and the nearest post to the South of him! RLM 1972).

I began to search the village, and found a French Artillery post in the centre of it, and in it a big crowd of French, and our own Argyll wounded. I then came upon a sort of cave, and found in it a number of unwounded and wounded Argylls. At the Western corner of the village was a big crowd of our dead - caught obviously by shell fire.

I then went downhill at the bend of the ridge and found little Sandy Miller and his platoon, all properly placed at the bottom of the ridge, but less a number of casualties. He had managed to keep his men together better than the others, but he had never received operation orders! When caught by the shelling he had gone forward with his men, and although he was in a rotten hole, by this judicious action he had succeeded in keeping down the number of his casualties.

Of his immediate situation and surroundings he knew absolutely nothing, except that he himself had been over a certain amount of ground. His men had seen Langridge and me cross round in front of them, but had not told him. Of the remainder of his Coy. ('B') and of his O.C. Coy. he knew nothing, and so, of course he could only stay where he was.

I came back up again to report and found 'A' Coy. in their new position, minus a good many casualties. 'A' Coy. had received their orders alright. On the way back to Bn. H.Q. to report we came across several more casualties - one or two of them runners, poor devils. Battalion H.Q. were relieved to get my news. Neither Battalion H.Q. nor Bde. H.Q. nor Divisional H.Q. had the foggiest idea about what had happened.

Things began to quieten down a bit. Had a yarn with the C.O. (Colonel Wilson). He wants me to take a company - told him I would be delighted.

RELIEVED BY ROYAL SCOTS

Word came in for relief by the 13th. Royal Scots. Had to go up again with orders, as no one knew the way. I took them up, carried out the relief, and found Bradshaw and McElwee. Finished somewhat late. Lost my skean-dhu. Very sorry about it.

24th. When the relief was completed, I was told to remain behind to show Col. Turner of the Scots over the ground. He was an original 11th. Argyll. They were very good to me, the Scots. Went up to Bradshaw's cave with Col. Turner in the morning. The Boche sniped at us with pip-squeaks and shrapnel for nearly 500 yards as we were coming over the open ridge. I got a rare view of Soissons through my glasses. Glorious country for fighting. I took it as a compliment on the part of the Boche that they should turn a couple of field guns on two men like Turner and myself. Lunched with the Scots. Rejoined my battalion in the afternoon.

Then I was informed that I have to go down with reserves (or 'details') for a rest - not sorry, for I needed it. Left Missy-aux-Bois, our Bn. H.Q., before dark, and almost got lost on my way back as I came by Dommiers. Arrived late, and slept with the sky for a covering.

COL. TURNER KILLED

26th. News of the death of Colonel Turner and his signal officer, Sgt. Shaw, Signalling Officer of 13th Royal Scots. The poor fellows had occupied the same hole in the ground for their H.Q. as we had had on the previous night, when an odd shell came in and killed them. Heavy rain. Whole place swimming.

27th. Fourteen hours sleep. God! It was fine. Attended funeral of Colonel Turner and Shaw. Heavy rain. We buried them on a green hillside.

We have been living in a sort of rustic bower - such as the poets sing about - until they have had to live in one during a rain storm. This one of ours let in everything, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and RAIN, in buckets.

28th. Played bridge badly.

29th. Word of more casualties to the Bn. who are in the line and doing well. I do hate the Hun now.

30th. July 1918. My birthday! Aged 22!

1st. August, 1918. Heavy bombardment all morning, the big guns around us going all out, and making a hellish row. Boche dropped a few bombs around us during the night. I am still at the transport lines.

2nd. August. Rejoined the battalion in a railway tunnel near Lechelle - found everyone choked up with 'colds' or with poison gas. Moved forward to Villemontoire at night, the scene of previous day's attack. Many dead lying about, many much decomposed. Put up in the caves - the whole Battalion! It was like prehistoric times! These caves were in a deep hillside, and were very big. We found some Boche machine gunners nearby, chained to their guns - dead! The division is pushing on! Royal Scots at Villebain.

During the previous two or three days our Battalion, and especially Lieut. D.T. McAinsh gave most distinguished service at Buzancy, earning great commendation all round from French and British. The Battalion got well beyond its objective.

August 3rd. Our men out 'souveniring'. I bought a nice pair of prismatic glasses from a Royal Scot for 60 francs. Sent it home to Father as a present. Word came to move at 1.40 p.m. - a perfect hell of a march to Longavesnes, behind Montgobert - fetched up at 11 p.m. Men glorious, not one fell out. Q.M. supplied grand soup on arrival. Slept like a log. We are all finding open warfare more tiring than trench warfare.

MOVING NORTH

August 4th. Anniversary of something or other - I believe, of the start of the war! On the move again, by bus, to Liancourt area. Embussed at 12.30 p.m. - Viviers - 3 hours late in starting - passed via Coeuvres where we had been bombed, Haute-Fontaines, where we hadn't slept, felt rotten in bus, so played bridge - Pierrefond - Morierval - Buissy - Arsy - and over the Durcq - Rivecourt - Canly - Cleremont - slept a bit of the way, debussed about 10.30 - where, at Bethencourt, we billeted in the same houses as before. Inhabitants very pleased with us.

Paris papers lauding the Scottish Divisions - the 9th, 15th, 51st. and 52nd. to the skies. Very tired. Slept till 10 a.m.

5th. Rain in morning. Gee! I am pleased with my men. Rain in afternoon. Got soaked. McAinsh strongly recommended for the Military Cross. Hear I am recommended for a bar to my M.C. myself. MacLeod should get something for this - he has worked like a Trojan.

6th. Wrote letters of sympathy.

OUR SERVANTS AMUSE US

7th. On the move again. Marched to Laigneville to entrain. Sorry to leave the district. Entrained about 9.30 a.m. Moved off 2 1/2 hours later, the men being in dirty, filthy cattle wagons - Hermes - halt for lunch - Beauvais, Amiens, Doullens.

Detained at Frevent at 11 p.m. Waited 3 hours on buses - very tired - reached Grand Rullecourt about 5 a.m. and had breakfast. The Colonel's, Adjutant's, 2nd. i/c's and my own servants were all paid before we left Bethencourt. They had a monumental binge there. They have not recovered yet! They probably all thought they were going to lose their jobs for this morning each has fluttered round us for hours, trying make us comfortable. Very funny!

SOISSONS - POINTS LEARNED

My experiences on the Soissons Front have been most valuable, and I've been thinking deeply over the lessons to be learned from them. Points learned:- (1) Value of cover and camouflage. (2) Necessity of minimising daylight movement. (3) Uselessness of our Divl. M.G. Battalion in attacks in open warfare. Only weapon is the Lewis Gun. (4) Importance of accurate and rapid map reading. I saw several officers make bad mistakes. (But some of the maps, French ones, were old and inaccurate RLM 1972) (5) Necessity for not accepting verbal reports, unless first hand from reliable men. (6) Necessity for reconnaissance by commander. (7) In event of bombardment - never go back!!! (8) Need for closer liaison with gunners - there were too few forward observation officers (F.O.O.s). (9) Closer co-operation in transport in Divl. Units. (10) Some odd points re. ammunition and its supply in the field. Ditto re. food and water. (11) I have seen too that a company in action in this kind of open warfare is too large to be directly controlled in everything by one man. The unit is the platoon. (12) The value of woods, valleys etc. for concealing movement. (13) Use of gas in valleys. (14) Value of M.G. in defence. (15) Need for aerial supremacy in a stunt. (16) Effectiveness of good night bombing. (17) Need for reporting H.Q. positions. (18) Value of good visual signals. (19) Need for two intelligence officers for each spread-out battalion in a big show. (20) Correct "handing over". (21) Above all I see how great is the need in this type of war to have men - even privates - who have enough initiative to act on their own. Our present training fails here.

Good points noted were:- The rapidity of movement of all units when 'put to it'; the efficient Battalion food supply. We had excellent Q.M. and Transport Officers (Johnnie Dusseldorf, and Davie Barbour, from old 8th. Bn.); keenness of men and officers; ability to take over quickly; great work by runners and stretcher-bearers; value of work by mere individuals; value of surprise; value of a good adjutant like Macleod.

Loos-Scheldt 1918

9th. August. 1918. Large draft of new officers. Capt. A.C.Welch back.

10th. Col. Wilson is receiving the Cross of the Legion d'Honour, and Macleod the Croix de Guerre, both well merited. Corporal Langridge who had been out with me got the Medaille Militaire plus Croix de Guerre with palmes - the highest French award for gallantry.

11th. Out revolver shooting with C.O. Am beginning to wonder when I'm to get the company promised me.

12th. Lectured the signallers and runners on the lessons I had learned down South.

13th. Brigade Parade to receive the French Awards from our Divisional General. Rather an amusing show.

OFF TO COY. COMMANDERS' SCHOOL - 1ST. ARMY

16th. Left for Tinqes - train to Boulogne where I stayed the night. Then out to the Army School at Hardelot at night.

18th. School splendidly situated in midst of sandhills. Glorious sea breezes. This is a school for Company commanders. There are a great many captains and not a few majors attending it.

19th. Grouped into platoons. Lectures. Finished "Soldier Poets".

20th. Played rugby after a busy day.

25th. A swim! A fine busy life, plenty of exercise, odd visits to Boulogne. Good feeding and fine Company. Am feeling fit. Good war news continuing. Monchy has fallen! Hurrah!

30th. Received a nice letter from General H.L.Reid, V.C. Commanding the 15th. Division, congratulating me on my Bar to the Military Cross.

THE WAR IS SPLENDID!

1st. September, 1918. This is a fine war - at Hardelot Plage! Football in morning (Sunday) against No. 2 platoon - a draw. Put up my 'rosette', so had an embarrassing time. Church at night.

2nd. Monday. Played against No. 4 platoon and won by 2 goals to 1. This brings us to the final.

7th. Boxing - and so on - a rare life of sport and fun.

15th. September. Anniversary of my first show, two years ago, at Martinpuich on the Somme.

16th. Boxing. Was beaten by Pullen, an R.E.

19th. Fine dinner at PreChatelaine with Neame, our O.C. Platoon, a major in the Artist's Rifles.

Friday 20th. Guest night at the School - terrific scenes - the band - the champagne - the speeches - Burnet - Neame's promotion - rushing the band - dancing on the tables - chairing the Commandant - the names of those who weren't drunk easily counted.

Learned that my name had been singled out several days before from amongst the 150 officers at the school for retention as an instructor. It was submitted to Army H.Q. but Army would not allow it as the 15th. Div. is no longer in First Army. Am quite glad. Also heard that I was being very strongly recommended for Staff duties. Seems to me there is no chance of this happening as there are so many senior captains in my own battalion now that I can't even get a company for myself.

It has struck me that our instructing officers at the School here are, with a few exceptions unable to inspire any confidence in one. So few of them have ever seen any actual fighting. Some have never been in the trenches for more than a week.

Sunday 22nd. Early train. Up to St. Pol with Bob Semple and Brown, two pals at my school. Reached Calonne-Ricquart at 8 p.m. and billeted with Green of our regiment.

AN OLD STORY

Monday 23rd. Rejoined Battalion details at Noeux-les-Mines. All well. Found Bennett, our old Q.M. and Major Kirsop. Battalion is now in the line at Hulluch and Loos, near where it was in September 1915. Sgt. Mitchell, my dour, old, trusted signaller sergeant, has been killed in a raid on 19th., after 3 1/2 years very active, courageous service. Poor beggar! A few officers wounded after a successful raid by the Bn. Coogan and McAinsh did well. Prosser gone away for instructional duties. I wonder what they will do with me!

I heard from Bennett, the late Q.M. of the 11th. Bn. that after I had come out of the first show at Ypres last year (where I was with the stretcher parties) that a deputation from amongst the men, headed by Sergeant McQuarrie of 'D' Coy. waited on the C.O. at Orderly Room (i.e. Colonel Duncan) and said they had come to ask if I might be recommended for gallantry while with them, as they thought I deserved it thoroughly. Duncan, of course, said this was too irregular for anything. This now brings back to my memory many complementary and sympathetic remarks by officers which I did not quite understand at the time. Well! It was better to be thought well of by the men than to receive any decoration at the hands of Colonel Duncan.

24th. Took a cycle run up to the Battalion in the morning - H.Q. in the village of Loos. Stayed for the tour. Had a walk round companies. Very interesting place. Am to be signalling officer in the meantime. Played Vingt et un at night. Don't see any chance of promotion yet. Am full of beans and itching for work. I'd almost like a battle (pseudo-euphoria? RLM 1972).

25th. and 26th. Round line a lot. Now know it backwards. Great rumours that Boche is going back. We are going to try to hurry him. Saw figures for our casualties at Soissons - pretty high, but not half as bad as at Ypres. For the Division, figures are 165 officers and 3351 other ranks, of which 34 officers and 441 men were killed.

27th. Conference. All excitement. Hope the Boche will move.

28th. and 29th. More conferences and preparations. Camerons did a raid on our left but took no prisoners.

30th. Am taking over from Captain Macleod as he is going on leave.

OCTOBER 1918 - LOOS AGAIN

1st. October, 1918. Fairly quiet day. Began again as acting Adjutant. Boche patrols pretty active at night. Got no sleep owing to continued calls. About 9.20 a.m. word came that Boche was going back in front of Hulluch. Our companies, headed by patrols, were moving forward an hour later.

We encountered resistance from Bois de Dix-Huit and Bois de Quatorze but made very good progress by manoeuvring. Our first and second objectives taken by 2 p.m. 'B' and 'C' Coys. in front, 'D' and 'A' in support. Mens' spirits rampant. Lord! How I have longed for this time. Kept splendidly busy. C.O. at advanced H.Q. Very few casualties.

BOCHE RETIRING ALONG WHOLE FRONT

At 6 p.m. I went along to fix up food, and then opened a new H.Q. in the old front line at 7 p.m. Busy night again. Messages coming and going. Water, food and ammunition parties. Very dark. No moon. No sleep. Our patrols worked into 3rd. objective during the night, chiefly owing to Nairn, who was topping. It was apparent in many ways that the Hun meant to hold his third line but our early move where we broke in and rolled up his flanks, upset him. Nairn's work was 'A.I.'. We got 12 prisoners, 7 machine guns, and killed 27 Boches. By 8 a.m. on 2nd. Oct. the 3rd. objective was ours all over, and patrols were working into Vendin. 'A' and 'D' went through 'B' and 'C' at 11 a.m. Lord, it was grand!

Much sniping. Capt. Billy Irvine on the right simply in his element. People further to the right somewhat slow - opposition from a switch line held them up slightly. Bn. H.Q. to Bois de Quatorze at 11 a.m. Relieved at night by Royal Scots. Our total casualties 5 killed and about 20 wounded.

Back to Loos on 3rd/4th. Grand feed on arrival at old dressing station. Bed at 1 a.m. on 4th. Slept like a log for 8 hours. Bumph all day.

6th. Boche asked for armistice. Hurrah! Hope we don't give it until we reach the Rhine.

7th. to 9th. Having a good time.

10th. Bn. relieved in Loos by K.O.S.B. Came down to Mazingarbe in daylight to a fair billet.

11th. Discussed staff appointment with C.O. and Bde. Major. Will probably remain with the Bn. especially as war is near an end.

13th. Colonel Wilson's birthday! - a big splash. (He never disclosed his age to anyone. I guess he might be 2 or 3 years older than myself. RLM. 1972). Bed very late.

14th. Busy day. Dined with 'D' Coy. Billy Irvine is going home for six months rest.

15th. Warned to go up the line. Inspection by General Birdwood, G.O.C. 5th. Army. Was introduced to him afterwards. Moved off at 6 p.m. in hell of a hurry, via Vermelles, Hulluch, to Bienfontaine. Arrived at 9 p.m. Cold night. 44th. and 46th. Brigades are moving forward.

16th. Oct. A day of tremendous rumours. One order followed and contradicted another in quick succession. Finally it was decided to march via Vendin-le-Vieil and Pont ^ Vendin where there was a great block in the traffic. Bridges broken. Dead horses. Huge mine craters. On to Estevelles and Evinoy which we reached at 4 p.m.

17th. Passed through 44th. Brigade at dawn - through Bois d'Epins - Libercourt - then Wahagnies where I got bitten to death by mosquitos.

WAR AS I LIKE IT TO BE

18th. On again. Camerons in front, forming advance guard to Division. On again, always just failing to see Boche by two or three hours. Then to Doeux Ville, Loffrande and Chateau de Bloc, where we spent the night. Some machine gunning. Camerons held up.

19th. Our turn for advance guard. Passed through Capelle, and several other places. Some opposition on the right, but on the whole it was child's play. Am enjoying this immensely. Am bang full up with work, but it's fine. I've a horse too, and I use it! H.Q. in the huge castle at Genech. Rode round the front line on horseback. (Did I? RLM. 1972).

20th. Rested at Genech.

21st. Off again at noon via Bercu to Mourchin, just short of the Scheldt Canal where evidently Boche was prepared to fight. Guns busier again.

22nd. Easy day. Played football against the sergeants. Won by 5 goals to 2.

REFUGEES FLOCKING IN

Pitiable scenes outside H.Q. with refugees. Appalling beyond all description. I feel bitter against the Hun, as never before. Our village is full of white-haired women, pale faced girls, and little mites of babies. Lorry after lorry has been passing through, with refugees, each piled high with a mass of suffering humanity, shawl-less women and babies. Some of the latter were even gassed. There were young women too who had been forced to work in the mines, and others who had been outraged. It was a never ending procession of the hungry, helpless, homeless and tired.

I have seen some aspects of life since my last leave!

I arrived back in France on March 14th, 1918, just in time to be in at the beginning of the Hun offensive on 21st. March, when he attacked us in great numerical superiority with more guns, and a heavier concentration of men, and materials, and aeroplanes than we had. I was then present when the evacuation of Monchy was ordered. Then again, I had the luck to be in it when the 3rd, 15th. and 4th. Divisions stopped his road to Arras, when we had no other reserves than the Divisional Cyclists and R.E.s - and even they were in the line - when everything looked black, and every Boche gun pointed to Paris (Oh! RLM. 1972).

I was there when he made his last bid for that city, when the Division was hustled down to Champagne, and pitched into line at Compiègne, and where we had to carry out our counter-attacks on July 23rd. and succeeding days, which, carried on at every point of the line, have sent the enemy back over his much-vaunted Hindenburg line, cleared the coast of Belgium, and taken us into territory we have not seen since August, 1914. Now we have pushed forward over the Loos Battlefield of 1915, past Lens and Lille, and up to the gates of Tournai. In all my experience there has not been such an eventful period. It has been great for a mere schoolboy like myself to be present during these great shows.

At night, in the midst of a tremendous argument about the League of Nations, Macleod suddenly blew back from leave.

24th. Handed over to him. Left Mouchin at 3 p.m. Stopped a corps car which took me to Corps H.Q. at Thurmerses, got a corps car to Carvin, and then obtained an R.F.C. tender to Petit Sains, near Mazingarbe, where I had dinner.

LEAVE BEGUN - AND ENDED

25th. Fine sleep. Walked to Noeux-les-Mines, via Bracquemont. Very few soldiers about. They have all gone forward. Car to Bethune. I'm now pretty good at stopping cars. Bethune is a pitiable spectacle - in ruins - like Ypres, a City of the Dead. One would think a destroying angel had passed over the town. A lorry to Lillers. An ambulance to Aire. R.F.C. tender to St. Omer where I had a fine lunch. Lorry to Guines, tramway to Calais which I reached about 4 p.m. Pretty good going for 24 hours! Got a room in Sauvage Hotel. Met Fyfe, Mackie, Eric Duncan, and best of all, Bobby Semple who stayed the night with me.

26th. Embarked at 7 a.m. Changed the date of my leave warrant so that I got over the day before. After all I had signed it myself! (I think! RLM. 1972). Crossed over with all my souvenirs, and reached Dover at 11 a.m. Wired L.M.M. to meet me in London, but she went to the wrong place. Bath at Euston Hotel. Gati's for dinner. Chin Chin Chow at night. Nearly lost my train. Travelled up with Bob Semple to Carlisle. Arrived home at 9.20 a.m. on 27th. and met Father.

9th. November 1918. Leave finished and it was good.

10th. Met L.M.M. in London. Stormy day at Dover. Good tea as usual. Good dinner too! Great shouting in streets of Calais at night. News of Armistice.

11th. November. Mobs rushing singing through the streets of at night. News of Armistice confirmed - Thank God!

I set off again for the battalion, but stopped en route to give me a chance of finding the grave of my friend, John McIntosh, a gunner, killed at Neuve Chappelle. Found gun pits. No graves nearby.

THE END OF THE GREAT WAR

11 a.m.

11th NOVEMBER 1918