

# Diary of Lance Corporal James Lawson Cairns

*Transcribed by Margaret Donaldson*

## First Diary

23<sup>rd</sup> February 1915 to 12<sup>th</sup> June 1915

*Tuesday 23rd February 1915 [Edinburgh]*

We were wakened at 5 a.m. and told to be ready to move at a moment's notice. It was not until after breakfast that we knew definitely that we were going away. Nobody was allowed out of barracks all day but we were kept busy inside getting everything straightened up & about 4.00 p.m. we were issued with 24hr rations & then had tea. There was a large crowd in front of the school, and as we left in company, they were kept busy. My company was the first to leave along with the Colonel<sup>1</sup> & staff. We fell in at 6.00 p.m. & marched to Princes Street Station where we entrained for Southampton. 5 men & 1 N.C.O per carriage so there was not too much room. We got breakfast at Oxford next morning.

*Wednesday February 24th*

After breakfast at Oxford continued our journey & arrived at Southampton at 12.45 p.m. and had to lend a hand to unload the transport and other baggage & put it on board ship. The ship was called *The Inventor* & was used as a cattle boat, so you can imagine what comfort there would be for us! We went on board at 1.00 p.m. & were [not] allowed off again. Left the harbour at 5.45 p.m. & sailed down Southampton water where we lay all night & next day, something happening in the channel prevented us proceeding further that night.

*Thursday February 25th*

This was a lovely day with warm sun & we lay about on deck and any other place such as the lifeboats were taken advantage of. We raised anchor at 7.30 p.m. and started on our voyage to Harve<sup>2</sup> under a large escort of cruisers. There was not much sleep for us as we could not make ourselves comfortable & to make matters worse nobody was allowed on deck & so we did not see anything of what was going on around us. Most of the sailors were Hindus & made a good deal of money out of us by coming round with tea & coffee, hot water & oranges. The sea was lovely & I don't think anyone was sick.

*Friday February 26th*

All went well & we had a fine voyage & we arrived outside Harvre harbour at 4.00 a.m. but we had to wait till 6.30 a.m. for the tide. Entered the dock & got fixed and then had breakfast & got all our things together. Disembarked at 8.00 a.m. & had to assist with the unloading transport. Left for the next camp about midday & had a very stiff march up hill all the way. When we arrived there was hardly a man who was not done up. It was a very nice camp but awfully cold but we only stayed one night so there was no bad effect.

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Blair

<sup>2</sup> Le Havre

*Saturday February 27th*

After a hurried breakfast we left at 8.30 a.m. & marched to the station. Had to assist in loading the transport on to the train & all our provisions. We were then issued with goats' skin coats & entrained in cattle trucks, 36 men to each. Saw Mr McLean Watt<sup>3</sup> at the station & had a word with him. Left at 1.00 p.m. for somewhere unknown. It was most uncomfortable as we had nowhere to stretch our legs. Stopped on the way & were given hot coffee with rum in it. Of course we were carrying enough rations to last the journey. Nobody was sorry when we got to the end of this journey.

*Sunday February 28th*

Got to a place called Cassel about 10.00 a.m. & landed for breakfast. This meal was partaken sitting on our kits in the railway yard and consisted of biscuits & cheese & jam & anything we could lay our hands on. Left Cassel on a 15 mile march to our billets over the most awful roads & carrying all our belongings with us which made a very heavy load. Nobody thought of food when we got to our destination but into our beds. We are only a short distance from the firing line & can hear the guns firing quite plain.

*Monday March 1st*

We are billeted in a straw shed and are very comfortable. Had a good night's rest & feel better but hope I am not required to move all day. Expect we shall be here for some days & then move on nearer to the trenches. We have had a lot to put up with. We get a wash about every second day & then only a sham. We are rather short of rations but can manage to buy bread in the village. Every house around here has soldiers in it & there seems to be very few civilians go about.

*Tuesday March 2nd*

Lay in bed all forenoon & got up for dinner. In the afternoon fired 5 rounds through our rifles to see they were all right. Mine misfired 3 times so had to go to the armoury for repairs. After that we were free so had a walk to the village for exercise. Of course we have a certain amount of fatigue work to do every day but when everyone lends a hand it is soon done. We have a rifle inspection each day to see that we keep our rifles in good working order. In these times our rifle is our best friend & whenever we go out on duty or otherwise it has to go too.

*Wednesday March 3rd*

Had a lecture on how to enter or leave a trench from a Lieut. Young<sup>4</sup> of 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Scots an old member of the 9th. He also gave us a few hints on the care of arms. At night Lieut. Young took us out & gave us practice on the former lecture but we had no trench but only supposed there was one. It was an awful job as it was pitch dark & we had to follow wherever he took us & at times we were wading knee deep in water & at others ankle deep in mud & whenever he fired a pistol we had to lie down flat wherever we were. We were a fine mess before we got back. It was all very interesting but might have been more so if the ground had been better.

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<sup>3</sup> Lauchlan MacLean Watt, minister at St Stephen's, poet, novelist

<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Norman Young, killed in action 23 April 1915

#### *Thursday March 4th*

Had to get up sooner than usual because we were to be inspected by the Brigadier General.<sup>5</sup> After the inspection our captain came along and told us that the general was very pleased with us & we were a fine body of men. I was corporal of the guard but we got orders to get ready to move so was relieved by another corporal. If the General had seen us in spats & all polished up I might have agreed with him, but to be inspected after our previous night's experience did not give us half a chance. However I suppose it was the men he was looking at not the clothes.

#### *Friday March 5th*

Left the straw shed & had a 10 mile march to new billet nearer firing line.<sup>6</sup> Leaving at 3.00 p.m. & arriving at 7.30 p.m., almost dead, & were billeted in a camp about ankle deep in mud & full of ditches. No place to be going about in the dark. We were put into tents, 20 men to each & found it a bit of a crush but it helped to keep us warm. The floor was covered with straw & then we lay down our waterproof sheets & then I put down my goatskin & then got into my blankets which I had made into a bag & spread my greatcoat over all. I was really very comfortable and in the circumstances I had a good rest.

#### *Saturday March 6th*

We stayed in bed all day only getting up for meals until about 8.00 p.m. when we had to get up & get ready for parade at 10.00 p.m. and march to a place close behind our last line of trenches & erect barbed wire entanglements, bullets flying about us all the time but fortunately nobody was hurt. It was a difficult job as it was so dark we could not see what we were doing with the result that majority of us got some nasty tears with the wire. All night long both sides sent up star rockets to see where each other are & when we are there, especially going to & from the trenches we are supposed to lie down wherever we are.

#### *Sunday March 7th*

Returned from trenches at 6.30 am after a very exciting time. Went to bed & stayed there until 12.00 p.m. Got up & tidied up the tent before having dinner which consisted of stewed bully beef which went down very well. Very wet & making the ground worse if it is possible to do so. Had our first issue of 12 cigarettes & this has to last us a week. Went to the trenches same as previous night & had much the same experiences except that one man in another company was wounded in the arm. I understand that those sent home wounded or sick need not come back unless they like but if they don't they have to go into the Home Defence. Of course this only applies to Territorials.

#### *Monday March 8th*

Stayed in bed till dinnertime then got up & had the same meal as previous day. Fell in for the trenches at 6.30 p.m. & marched off at 7.00 p.m. & continued the same kind of work. Weather rather improved but still nothing to boast of. Some very narrow escapes with bullets. In fact things were so serious that we had to lie down for half an hour till things quietened down a bit. At one time we thought there were snipers about but could not be sure.

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<sup>5</sup> Brigadier General Macfarlane, commanding 81<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade, inspected them on 3 March 1915

<sup>6</sup> B Company to Dickebusch 6 March 1915

*Tuesday March 9th*

Lovely day had my first wash for 5 days so feel a little cleaner. Had instructions that a N.C.O must be put in charge of the water cart owing to the bad condition of the water here. I got the job & am responsible for the men getting a sufficient supply. It is a difficult job as all the water has to be boiled before using. This is done in a creamery about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from here & supplies all the troops round about. Each cart has to take its turn & sometimes we have to wait over an hour. The cart has to be disinfected each time before filling it with this water. Of course the water for cooking is drawn from a pump & has to be carried in buckets to the cart. Heard very heavy firing about 9.00 p.m. which lasted about 2 hours.

*Wednesday 10th March*

Have been kept busy going backwards & forwards for water all day & am pretty tired. Of course I don't go on parade at night when I am on duty through the day. We got our first pay since leaving Edinburgh consisting of the large amount of 5 Francs.

*Thursday 11th March*

Practically the same as previous day only more trouble to get water as pump at creamery has broken down and not expected to be working again for some days. All the water has to be taken from a pump in buckets & carried to the cart a distance of about 30yds so it is no light job, especially when the cart holds 100 gallons & has to be filled 3 or 4 times a day. Then this has to be brought  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile over the most awful road.

*Friday 12th March*

Getting very tired of water cart as we have such difficulty in getting water of any kind but suppose somebody has to do it. "A" company went into the firing line for 24 hrs and had 2 men wounded not seriously.<sup>7</sup> It was a very quiet night, could hardly hear the guns at all. My company was out until 3.30 a.m. working behind our own trenches. They are preparing ground for a retreat. When we are on this work we wear our cap comforters as they are not so conspicuous.

*Saturday March 13th*

Rose at 6.00 a.m. & went for water and had to go back other three times owing to the remainder of the battalion coming up. I asked the doctor if the Corporal of the R.A.M.C could not take over my job & he agreed & I was very glad. I went down & showed the new man where to get water & then gave up the job. Had a good rest for remainder of the day & did not go out with the company at night as I was too late getting back. When we come back from working at the trenches we are given a hot drink either of tea or soup.

*Sunday March 14th*

Rested all day until 6.00 p.m. when we turned out to go to the trenches but very heavy firing began about 5.00 p.m. all along the line & we got orders to stand fast. The Adjutant<sup>8</sup> cycled out to headquarters & returned with the news that we were to go back to our huts and the whole battalion was to get ready to move at a moment's

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<sup>7</sup> Privates Thomas Garry and Beaumont Beatson

<sup>8</sup> Captain Robert Maxwell Dudgeon, Cameron Highlanders

notice. At 10.00 p.m. we got further orders that we could go to bed but not to take off our things. We had to hand back the tinned rations we had been issued with & another company took rations out to our men in the trenches. The firing was awful & continued all night & we are told that we lost 25 trenches but retook them again. Things are so bad that we could not relieve "C" company as we should have done.

#### *Monday 15th March*

Rose at 8.00 p.m. feeling very much the better for a full night in bed. The big gun fire still continues but not so hard. I was just going to start writing letters when I got sent for to go to Wistontre [Westoutre?] for 30 bags of mails with transport. Left at 2.00 p.m. without dinner and got there at about 4.00 p.m. a distance of about 5 miles loaded up & started on our return journey but got stuck in the ditch getting out of the way of another wagon. Had to wait till two more horses came to pull us out. The result was I did not get back until 7.00 p.m. & my company had gone to the trenches for 24 hours. I was awfully sick but could not help myself. We saw a zeppelin in the distance. Now I am going to bed to sleep off my disappointment.

#### *Tuesday 16th March*

Got up at 9.00 a. m. & made my own breakfast of ham & eggs. Got eggs at farm nearby for 2d each. Helped to sort out mails & found a couple of parcels for myself. One from Aunt Rae & the other from Uncle Tom. Changed all my clothes & sent dirty ones home. Wrote letters to Mother, Aunt Rae & Uncle Pat. Cleaned my rifle & tidied up the tent. Other 3 chaps in the tent, 2 sanitary policemen & a chap on the sick list with dysentery. Had tea about 5.00 p.m. & from then till 9.00 p.m. was kept busy taking blankets off packs & putting them up in bundles of 20 & placing them in tents ready for the company coming back from the trenches. Had supper & then off to bed.

#### *Wednesday March 17th*

Did not get up until 9.00 am. Had breakfast, the company returned about 2.00 a.m. with one or two slightly wounded. They had a very quiet but monotonous time & have no wish to go back. After breakfast we were kept busy for a couple of hours returning packs to their respective owners. Had a wash, shave & haircut & feel like a new man. Had dinner about 6.00 p.m. Got a parcel from mother & a p.c from Uncle Tom. Had rifle inspection at 4.00 p.m. tea at 5.00 p.m. At 6.00 p.m. got orders to parade in full marching order take all our belongings with us. This was to change huts this time we were placed 22 in hut 18'x16'.

#### *Thursday March 18th*

Got up & had breakfast then the whole company was put on fatigues to clean up the whole camp. My platoon got the job to dig a hole 12'x12'x4' to bury the rubbish in. It was very hard work, after we got about a foot down as the ground was pure clay. We struck work at 1.00 p.m. & had dinner. Had to hand back our skin coats & I am not sorry as I could not wear mine under my greatcoat, but I shall miss it for lying on. Shells have been bursting within a few hundred yards of us all day. Battery of artillery have been busy since early morning hiding themselves in a wood across the road from us. Rested all afternoon till teatime at 5 o'clock. Continued to rest till 10.40 p.m. when we had to fall in to march to the trenches for digging & relieve the other 2 platoons who went off at 5.30 p.m.

### *Friday March 19th*

Left trenches at 4.20 a.m. & got back at 6.00 a.m. The distance is about 5 miles each way over awful roads. Sleep all day except when we are disturbed for meals & even then only sit up to eat them. We were called at 6.00 p.m. & told we had to be ready in 1/2 hour. We went back to same trenches and continued digging. Each man had to carry something such as shovels or sandbags, barbed wire, a big coil of plain wire between two. We were about 200 yards from the firing line & were under pretty heavy fire all the time but only got one man wounded in the hand & leg. Slept all day again. Each day the whole battalion has to parade & clean up the camp. We were caught in a very heavy snow storm last night & the night before but it has been fine through the day.

### *Saturday 20th March*

Continued to work at the trenches under very heavy fire. The two platoons that go out early the one night go out late the next & vice versa. It seems we get a special mail on Saturday as we always get a very big one that day. It took us nearly all forenoon to sort it & to give it out. A number of aeroplanes flying about this morning which keeps the guns busy. Rested all day & did not go back to the trenches until 10.00 p.m. We have had a busy afternoon since the mail arrived. Nearly every chap in my tent got a parcel & all shared our eatables, so you can guess we had a busy time while they lasted.

### *March 21st Sunday*

Got back from the trenches about 5.00 a.m. & everybody said they had enjoyed themselves better than any other night. Had a hot drink & into bed where we stayed until 2.00 p.m. Guns very busy trying to hit aeroplanes but no luck. This is a perfect day & very warm. We have been singing hymns for about an hour & we have some very good singers in our tent. We often go through the good old Scotch songs. At 2.00 p.m. we had a church parade & sang the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, Abide With Me & Jesus Lover of My Soul. Had a fine sermon the text being "I am with you always". Had a ? bath & feel much the better for it. Got the good news we were to have the night off but unfortunately at 6.00 p.m. another L/Corporal & myself got orders to parade & go with the other part of the company. It is a perfect night & rather light

### *Monday 22nd March*

Returned from trenches at 2.00 a.m. after hot drink fell into bed. I had to report to the doctor at 12.00 p.m. to start my new job. Received parcels from Holmfoot & Aunt Marion & acknowledged both. Had quite an entertaining day getting to know my new work. Another lovely day & looks as if the weather had quite settled. Guns have been busy all day but are much quieter tonight. A large number of troops & transport pass this place every day. We are about 3/4 miles from the nearest village which is full of troops. We get bacon, bread, jam & bully beef issued each morning & get rum when we return from the trenches.

### *March 23rd Tuesday*

The company left for the trenches at 6 p.m. last night & returned at 4 a.m. They had 2 casualties, one fatal & the other very serious.<sup>9</sup> Have been kept busy all forenoon, firstly assisting the doctor with the sick men & then had we had to pack up all the

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<sup>9</sup> Private Fred Bennett killed, Private John Macdonald seriously wounded near St Eloi

things ready to move, I don't know where to but I don't think we are going far. We left camp at 8.00 p.m. & arrived at new billets at midnight. The Red Cross sergeant<sup>10</sup> went on in advance to find billets for us & had a ham & egg tea waiting for us. I was in charge of the ambulance wagon & travelled all the way on it. We are very comfortable, the doctor, sergeant & myself sleep together in one room, have a kitchen cooking range to eat in & we live in good style. Had heavy rain before we left & some on the way. Expect to be here for 4 days.

#### *March 24th Wednesday*

Got up about 9.00 a.m. & had more ham & eggs. Then after I had a wash & shave went round the billets with the doctor & at 12 noon had the sick parade after which I put all the things away & tidied up the place. Very wet here today. Wrote a few postcards. At 4.00 p.m. "D" Company passed on their return from 48hrs in the trenches & the doctor sent out an invitation to the officers to come & have dinner. We made a stew & fried some steaks & then gave them tinned fruit which the doctor had had sent & coffee & cake to finish. We got the same as them even to the doctor's cigarettes. Had a cup of cocoa & then off to bed.

#### *March 25th Thursday*

Rose at 6.30 a.m. & had a bath. Then had breakfast & helped tidy up. Went round billets & told them what time to parade for the doctor & when I got back helped to get dinner going. Very wet here all day. The whole battalion paraded in companies for a bath. At 2.00 p.m. we had our sick parade & I had plenty to do while it lasted. Then we had dinner to which the doctor stood us a bottle of red wine in my honour. After dinner I had one or two messages but on the whole had a very quiet day. Wrote letters to Mother & William. Just got orders we are to move again tomorrow but do not know where to. Weather settled again & it is a fine night. Had to go with doctor to visit "D" Coy & had to wade ankle-deep in mud.

#### *March 26th Friday*

Left our old billets at 7.30 a.m. & had a 10 mile march to new billets arriving about 12.30. The companies are billeted in nunneries<sup>11</sup> but we are billeted in a dwelling house & really it is the most comfortable place we have been in. The people are still here & will do anything for us. It has been a beautiful town but the German shells have done serious damage especially to the magnificent cathedral of which only the walls are left. Had a walk round with the sergeant & bought liver & pork chops for breakfast tomorrow. The way we live so well is each contribute 2/6 & the doctor 5/- per week. Of course the doctor is always getting things sent & he shares them. We travelled about 10 miles today & now we are only about 2 miles from the firing line so we shall have to keep alert.

#### *March 27th Saturday*

Rose at 6.30 a.m. & had a fine wash & shave. Had breakfast at 8.00 a.m. consisting of bacon & pork chops. Sick parade at 9.00 a.m. & it was the largest I have had (56 patients) & before we had got them all attended to it was dinnertime. At 2.00 p.m. we had another sick parade but quite a small one. Received parcels from home & Uncle Tom & acknowledged both. Went down to the hospital with the doctor. Had tea &

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<sup>10</sup> The doctor was Captain John Bowie RAMC; the Ambulance Sergeant variously Millikin, Milliken, Millikan etc. Billets at Mount Kokereel

<sup>11</sup> Abbaye des Dames Irlandaises d'Ypres

then settled down to write some letters. Guns very quiet today but a few aeroplanes going about. Just had Aymer<sup>12</sup> [?Aylmar] in for 10 minutes chat. Half the battalion marched off to do digging at the trenches at 7.30 p.m. Weather splendid but chilly at nights. In orders tonight no man is allowed out after 8.00 p.m. & all lights out by 9.00 p.m.

#### *March 28th Sunday*

Got up at 6.00 a.m. & made a cup of tea for the officers & ourselves. Washed & shaved & then had breakfast. Sick parade at 9.00 a.m. but small one. Kept busy for the rest of the morning doing messages for the doctor. Dinner at 1.00 p.m. consisted of tinned salmon, bread & butter & tea. Sick parade at 2.00 p.m. which was pretty big & after which I had to take 10 men to hospital & was kept waiting 1 ½ hours before the doctor came to examine them. When I got back did full justice to a ham & egg tea. Received a very nice parcel from Esselmont & acknowledged same, also letter from home & 2 *Weekly Scotsman* from Edinburgh. Have got a stove into the Medical room so we are still more comfortable. Guns have been busy firing at aeroplanes but did not manage to hit them.

#### *March 29th Monday*

Rose about 6.30 a.m. washed & shaved. Tidied up consulting room & then had breakfast. The first parade was a small one but the second made up. Took 2 men to hospital. Had dinner at 1.15 p.m. Several German aeroplanes passed over here today. I understand the station here was wrecked today by shells & 21 horses & 2 men killed, 7 men wounded. Two aeroplanes brought down. Went out for a walk with sergeant after tea & visited some of our friend's billets. I was very troubled with cramp during the night.

#### *March 30th Tuesday*

Rose at 6.00 a.m. & had a cold sponge. I was nearly frozen but feel fine now. Had a very small parade today. After the sick parade was over the sergeant & I went for a walk to try to find hot baths but was unsuccessful. We had a look through the cathedral & the outside has been magnificent. We also visited other fine buildings which have suffered shells. Got back for dinner at about 1.00 p.m. & then had our second parade after which I had one man to take to hospital. After tea I had to go down to hospital headquarters & ask them to send a motor ambulance for a man who was suffering from appendicitis. Wrote a long letter to Uncle Lawson & then went off to bed about 9.00 p.m. This has been a lovely day but cold.

#### *March 31st Wednesday*

Had a long lie today until 7.00 a.m. Had a splendid sleep & feel much refreshed. Had breakfast as usual & then sick parade. Did one or two messages for the doctor. Went round to the quartermaster's store to see what was doing & managed to get a nice bit of steak, some onions & potatoes so we had a fine dinner. Fairly big parade this afternoon but got through it all right. Wrote F. [T?] Perry a p.c. Rcd. letters from home, Rae & Betty. Had a very busy 2 hours by myself 1<sup>st</sup> a chap came to have a tooth drawn & brought a dentist with him. 2<sup>nd</sup> chap came in with gathering finger which I was in the middle of dressing when one of the cooks was brought in with a bad cut between thumb & forefinger. I had just started to clean it when he went off in

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<sup>12</sup> Despite the first name basis this is probably Lieutenant Aymer Maxwell



a dead faint. I managed to get it dressed & also to bring him round. Another lovely day & much milder.

#### *April 1st Thursday*

Rose about usual time & had breakfast. Nobody turned up for sick parade so we had an easy forenoon. Beautiful weather here now but rather cold at night. Received parcel from home & acknowledged it. Had roast beef & chips for dinner. 2nd parade was a big one & after it was over I had to take one man to hospital & get some new materials. Had a walk round quartermaster stores to draw rations. Changed my underwear & gave my dirty clothes to woman down stairs to wash. Nothing exciting going on here today. Lit our stove about 7.00 p.m. & spent the next 3 hrs reading.

#### *April 2nd Friday*

Got up at 7.00 a.m. & had a good wash. Much milder here today. The people are all dressed in their Sunday best ready for church. 2nd parade very large & one man for hospital. Received parcel from Southport & acknowledged same. Germans very busy today trying to shell a church near by here but were not quite successful. Sent lace collar & handkerchief home. Wrote long letter to Calgary. Had a walk round the town & did some messages for the doctor. Came on very wet about 7.00 p.m. so came in & read for a couple of hrs.

#### *April 3rd Saturday*

Had to be up sharp, 6.00 a.m. as the doctor wanted breakfast at 7.00 a.m. We had a Fine breakfast consisting of porridge, kidney, bacon etc. The doctor was going out to the trenches with the Adjutant & other officers along with the Colonel & some of the 9th Argylls. Been wet all night & does not look too promising now. First parade postponed. Had a very big parade this afternoon after which I took 4 men to hospital. We had a fine dinner of roast beef & chips. Received letter from Mother. Went out for a walk arriving back for tea. Went round & spent an hour with my friends in their billet. Rcd. slippers etc & acknowledged same. French battery close by very busy

#### *April 4th Sunday*

Rose at usual time. Have been kept busy since breakfast getting packed up in readiness to move to the trenches tonight. We have to be billeted in the cellar of a dwelling house close to the trenches.<sup>13</sup> Half the battalion are going tonight & the other half on or about Thursday. Unfortunately I have to be left behind here to help Captain Lucas<sup>14</sup> who is a doctor & is going to do the work till he goes to the trenches. Things have been very quiet here all day & the weather is fine. I am to sleep on the doctor's bed tonight, so I am going to turn in soon. Wrote home & to Mrs Lawson. Went to bed at 9.00 p.m. At 9.30 the Germans started to shell the town & continued about 25 mins. They did a great deal of damage besides killing several people & injuring many more.

#### *April 5th Monday*

I had a long lie this morning not rising till about 9.00 a.m. I felt a great deal the better of the soft bed. Had boiled eggs for breakfast & Madam fried me some steak & potatoes for dinner. I have just been round drawing my rations for tomorrow & got

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<sup>13</sup> Sanctuary Wood

<sup>14</sup> Captain Frederick Lucas

ham, bread, leeks, carrots, marmalade & a half candle. Been very wet here all day. Received letters from home & p.c from Miss D. French, battery very busy today. Had tea at about 5.00 p.m. & then spent the rest of the night reading & writing. Wrote long letter to Granny, went off to bed at 9.00 a.m.

*April 6th Tuesday*

Had the round of the clock in bed and feel fine & fresh after the rest. I cooked my own breakfast of ham & eggs & did full justice to it. I was busy all forenoon getting things ready to move at a moment's notice. I received a long letter from Aunt Maggie & also one from Dad. Made my own dinner consisting of stew & it was quite a success. Had a pretty large parade but got through it all right. Had a fine hot bath & then had a walk round to Q.M stores to see what I could pick up. Made tea about 5.00 p.m. Wrote a letter home & sewed my blankets into bags. Two shells passed over here about 7.00 p.m. but don't think they did much damage. Been very wet here all day. Now I am enjoying a nice cigar before going to bed. Turned in at 10 p.m.

*April 7th Wednesday*

We were wakened this morning at 7.45 a.m. by shells from the enemy. They continued to fall till about 8.15 a.m. & did considerable damage especially to our "D" Coy billets. They had 6 killed & 48 wounded besides many narrow escapes. Tonight I am going to sleep on the ground floor. "D" [A or B?] coy had 3 slightly wounded in the trenches. Weather very miserable today. Made meals similar to yesterday. Had to do the sick parade myself today as all the doctors were at the trenches. Rcd. no letters today at all. Have not been out at all today except when I went round for my rations. I feel a bit lonely here but expect to go to the trenches tomorrow night.

*April 8th Thursday*

Slept very well last night & was very comfortable. Have been busy doing nothing all forenoon. Had sick parade at 12.30 p.m. & I am now waiting to new billets. Had a hurried lunch of bully beef & tea & bread & butter about 2.00 p.m. Left for the Infantry Barracks at 4.00 p.m. & waited there till 7.00 p.m. then marched out to dugouts at distance of about 6 miles arriving there about 10.00 p.m. & after some difficulty found the doctor.<sup>15</sup> It was an awful march sometimes wading ankle deep in mud & at others splashing through water. I was very glad to get out of the town & feel much safer here although nearer the firing line. Received letter from Mother just before leaving.

*April 9th Friday*

Slept very well although the firing was pretty loud. Got up at 7.30 a.m. & went for water. Had breakfast & then a wash. We are very comfortable & have a good sized dugout. Made a bed out of thin trees with wire netting for a mattress for the doctor. Had a sick parade at 11.00 a.m. Dinner consisted of tea, bread & jam. All afternoon we were kept busy improving our new abode. We paved the floor with bricks & had a general tidy up all round. At 6.00 p.m. we got word that there were 9 wounded coming in & 5 were stretcher cases. We had to start at once to prepare for them as they have to stay in our dugout till the ambulance comes for them. We were kept busy till 1.30 a.m. & then we had to have something to eat & off to bed.

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<sup>15</sup> Glencorse Wood

*April 10th Saturday*

Got to bed at 2.00 a.m. had to rise again at 7.30 a.m. I had to go for water & then we continued the work of improving our little home. After dinner at 2.00 p.m. I lay down and fell fast asleep & slept till 6.00 p.m., when I woke the doctor asked me to take back a table to the Camerons which he had borrowed. This took me about 45mins & when I got back dinner was nearly ready. Dinner consisted of army rations taken out of their tins & heated up. We had an excellent meal followed by a cup of tea & a piece of cake. Then we had to prepare for cases coming in. Heavy firing in the trenches tonight & bullets & shell are continuously whizzing over the wood we are in. Received letters from Dad & Lizzie Rae

*April 11th Sunday*

Got to bed about 2.00 a.m. Only had 1 case & that very slight. Went for water after breakfast & have been kept busy more or less all day with chaps coming in with cut fingers & skinned legs. Every little cut has to be attended to at once in this awful country. We had another fatality last night<sup>16</sup> but on the whole have been very lucky so far. This has been a perfect day but unfortunately it is too risky to go for a walk. We have to wait up each night until all the men get back from the trenches in case anyone should require attention. Managed to get a couple of hours rest from 4-6.00 p.m. and then went for more water before dinner. Dinner consisted of mashed potatoes & mealy pudding & tinned fruit followed by tea.

*April 12th Monday*

We were not disturbed by any cases, so had a good night's rest. Rose at 7.30 a.m. & have been kept busy ever since getting ready to go back for our 4 days rest. We shall be last to leave as we have got word that there will be two cases coming at dark & then we shall have to wait for the two companies coming out of the trenches. There has been a lot of firing over here today & a large number of aeroplanes. One of our officers was brought in wounded this forenoon.<sup>17</sup> He was in a house near the trenches taking observations. Left the dug out at 11.30 p.m. on 8 mile march back to a rest camp<sup>18</sup> where we are to be for 4 days. Rcd. letter from mother.

*April 13th Tuesday*

Arrived here about 5.30 a.m. & after a cup of tea & a sandwich fell into bed & slept until 12.00 p.m. Got up & made dinner & then got our hut into order. Before we got here a zeppelin passed over the camp & dropped 2 bombs but fortunately they fell wide. Rcd. a parcel from home, Lizzie Rae, Miss Moses, Uncle Tom & acknowledged same. Paid my friends a visit & then had some supper. Rcd. letter from Dad containing money. Turned in about 10.00 p.m.

*April 14th Wednesday*

Got up about 7.00 a.m. only to find it had been raining all night & the ground was very muddy. Went for a bath at 11.00 a.m. & had to go about 3 miles<sup>19</sup> & then had to wait about 1/2hr did not get back till 3.00 p.m. just in time for sick parade which kept us going for over an hour. Had to do one or two things for the doctor & so I did not

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<sup>16</sup> Private James Brass

<sup>17</sup> Second Lieutenant Charles Melrose, a stray bullet in the leg

<sup>18</sup> Vlamertinghe

<sup>19</sup> Baths at Brandhoek

get tea till after 6.00 p.m. Spent the remainder of the day patching & sewing my own things and went off to bed at 9.30 p.m. Rcd letter from Mother & Ella.

#### *April 15th Thursday*

This is a perfect day with very warm sun. Company's been drilled for about an hour & now the chaps are lying about basking in the sun. Had a very big parade today but mostly cuts & bruises, so I had plenty to do. Very heavy firing at the trenches during the night & it is rumoured that the Germans tried to advance but failed. Received letter from Nessie Lawson. Had dinner at 2.00 p.m. consisting of sardines on oatcakes followed by tea & cakes. Kept busy in various ways till tea time at 6.00 p.m. After which we had just got settled when we got orders to pack up & get ready to move. Everybody was in a bustle in 5 minutes & the battalion left about an hour after getting orders. We had to wait till 11.30 p.m. for the transport to take our stuff.

#### *April 16th Friday*

We arrived at our new billet<sup>20</sup> at 1.30 a.m. & after a cup of tea fell into bed. This is the best billet we have been in yet & is a very fine house but unfortunately we have to leave again tonight for the dugouts. We went out for breakfast as we had no materials to cook with. Had sick parade at the billets & after that spent the rest of the forenoon getting things ready to move. Had dinner & now I am trying to snatch 40 winks. Rcd. letter from Dad. I slept for 2 hrs & woke in time for tea. Tea over I lay down again & had another half hour. We left for the dugout at 9.30 p.m. & progress was very slow owing to the night being very dark.

#### *April 17th Saturday*

Arrived dugout at 1.30 a.m. & after a hot drink fell into bed. All forenoon we were busy improving our little home by putting up shelves & cupboards. This afternoon we are enjoying a rest. Wrote long letter home. Weather splendid. A large number of aeroplanes flying about keeping the aerial guns busy. Big guns firing became very brisk about 7.00 p.m. Made supper of mashed potatoes & haggis followed by tea & bread & butter & went off to bed at 8.30 p.m. Lovely weather with warm sunshine.

#### *April 18th Sunday*

Slept sound till 7.00 a.m. not being disturbed all night as there were no cases to come in. After breakfast I washed & shaved & then prepared for sick parade at 11.00 a.m. This was a small one, so we have had an easy day. We have had a fairly lazy day & I had time to go round to visit my friends. Had our photographs taken by the Colonel. Dinner consisted of salmon sandwiches & tea. Supper was a good meal of stew after which we had a quiet smoke & a read. Wrote a long letter to Nessie Lawson. Only 1 wounded man & 3 sick came up from the trenches about 10.00 p.m. so we managed to get to bed about 12.00 p.m. Rcd. letters from Aunt Maggie & mother.

#### *April 19th Monday*

Rose at 6.00 a.m. & made a cup of tea, tidied up the hut & then prepared breakfast. Charming morning but seems a little frosty through the night. At 11.00 a.m. we had a sick parade but did not last long. Lunch came out at 1.30 p.m. and consisted of potted meat sandwiches & tea. The most of the afternoon was spent in resting, writing & sleeping. Shelling began about 7.30 p.m. but were going right over beyond our camp.

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<sup>20</sup> Overnight at Ypres, before returning to Glencorse Wood

No word of any casualties so hope to get another good night's sleep. Turned in about 9.30 p.m.

#### *April 20th Tuesday*

[?] Had kippers for breakfast, a present from the Colonel. Had rather a busy forenoon one way & the other. Lunch at 1.30 p.m. consisted of sardine sandwiches, bread & butter & tea. After dinner I shaved & from 4.00-6.00 p.m. I don't know what happened because I fell asleep but I am told the big guns were very busy. Tea was made of ham & chips. And after the dishes were washed were busy for the next hour packing up ready to move back for 4 days rest. Sgt. Young<sup>21</sup> of "A" Coy. was killed this morning. A large number of shells passed over us today & we hear that the town I sent photos of is practically in ruins. We had one or two unexpected cases just before we left but none serious.

#### *April 21st Wednesday*

We left the dugouts at midnight & arrived at the rest camp<sup>22</sup> at 4.00 a.m. After unloading the cart & a hot drink fell into bed stayed there until 2.30 p.m. The town I sent you photos of has been shelled heavily for the past two days & is now practically in ruins. Had sick parade at 4.00 p.m. but very small one. Received parcel from Uncle Tom & William also letters from same. After tea about 7.00 p.m. we turned in again & soon fell asleep. Our new Sgt Major<sup>23</sup> arrived today & is the man who trained me when I joined.

#### *April 22nd Thursday*

We were up in good time and after a fine breakfast of ham & eggs we cleaned our hut & prepared for sick parade. This proved to be a large one, as Sergeant Millikan had been sent a message, I was kept busy. Managed to get a new pair of boots & a khaki shirt. This is a perfect day & guns very quiet. This afternoon was spent resting then had tea about 6.00 p.m. At about 7.00 p.m. a German Aeroplane passed over our camp & was heavily shelled. The big guns have been shelling all afternoon & things are very lively tonight. 8.00 p.m. we got word to pack up & be ready to move. The battalion left at 10.00 p.m. & we left shortly afterwards but lost them altogether. Nobody seemed to have seen them anywhere.

#### *April 23rd Friday*

After looking till 1.00 a.m. for the battalion without success we returned to the rest camp & had just got laid down when we got word from them. We found them in a wood & remained there until about 11.00 a.m. Then we got orders to move & had to do so under shell fire. The doc., sergeant & myself went to the nearest dressing station & started work about 2.00 p.m. We dressed between 20 & 40 of our own men. We were kept hard at it & had not even time to get any food. The medical cart has not arrived yet & our kit & all our belongings are on it. All the trouble was caused by the French leaving their trenches. Germans had been firing stink bombs & the smell was felt for miles around<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sergeant Charles Young

<sup>22</sup> Vlamertinghe

<sup>23</sup> Regimental Sergeant Major Peter McLachlan

<sup>24</sup> Cairns describes the chlorine gas attack of the Second Battle of Ypres. The battalion had spent part of the night at Potijze Wood. Cairns was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his part in this action.

*April 24th Saturday*

Continued working all night & right on till 9.30 a.m. when we had to leave our station as shells were coming fast & furious. Took up our abode about 500 yards further down the line. We were working with Canadian chaps & they were very decent. We stuck here ourselves & the Canadians went further on. We just got things ready when the wounded began coming in & continued all night. Several times we had to leave & take shelter elsewhere, the shells were coming so near. We never got a decent meal all day but had to try & satisfy ourselves with tea & biscuits.

*April 25th Sunday*

We got word early this morning that there was to be a big shove, so we started at once to get a lot of things ready. About 5.30 a.m. they started coming & we were kept busy all day. About 7.00 a.m. we had to quit our billet taking a couple of bags of bandages & things & went into a cellar & did our work there. The artillery on both sides were very busy & according to the number of men that passed through our hands both must have been pretty effective. There was a short lull in the afternoon but made up for it at night. We got word that there was to be a general advance so we got a number of bandages & things ready.

*April 26th Monday*

We were kept very busy so much so that we had not time even to think of sleep. Every available space was taken up with wounded. A convoy of about 24 ambulances arrived about 12.30 a.m. & we had loaded 2 & were busy on the 3<sup>rd</sup> when a stink shell burst in the middle of the road killing a few & wounding a large number including the doctor, sergeant & 5 stretcher bearers.<sup>25</sup> We were busy attending the wounded when the first car went on fire & we had to unload it. It was an awful sight & we could hardly work because of the bad fumes. When the car went on fire the Germans sent over 3 more of these awful shells. We had to lift the wounded without bandaging them & get them away. When they had gone there did not [?] seem to be a bit more room. After we had got the convoy away I had to lie down as I was absolutely dead beat. We were busy making some food when two men arrived to take us to the battalion, the adjutant having heard the news.

[GAP IN DIARY]

*May 3rd Monday*

We were busy preparing breakfast when we got orders to move but managed to have something before we left. Again we had to take only what we could carry but were able to send back for the remainder of our stuff. We are in reserve trenches<sup>26</sup> & all our men are busy getting dugouts made. It is a very nice place & well concealed & we may be here for some time. Rcd letter from mother & Aunty May also from Dr B. At 4.30 p.m. got orders to pack up & move down a bit. The medical staff making their dressing station near by in a house. Germans had made another attack

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<sup>25</sup> Dr Bowie wounded in both legs below the knee, Sergeant Millikan wounded lower jaw, hand and shoulder

<sup>26</sup> Sanctuary Wood

#### *May 4th Tuesday*

We got back to dugouts about 1.30 a.m. after wandering the roads for nearly 10 hours without food. It was awful as we got on so slowly 10 or 20 yards & then a halt & so on. The doctor & I squeezed into a hole meant for one & were soon sound asleep but woke nearly frozen. Spent an hour enlarging our dugout, the whole battalion is busy digging themselves in. We had breakfast & dinner together at 11.30 a.m. after which I washed & shaved. Shells flying fast & furious over our heads & some land uncomfortably near. The afternoon was taken up by various little jobs including writing letters home & to Dr B. Tea at 6.30 p.m. & then we were kept busy getting A & B Coys. ready for the trenches. Not having fixed a time for sick parade we had chaps coming at all times.

#### *May 5th Wednesday*

After breakfast until dark we were kept busy making a dugout for a dressing station except when we had to break off for sick parade and cut fingers etc. It is reported that we lost hill 60 today owing to Germans using stink bombs. The shells have been flying fast & furious all day but no casualties. It has been a very hot day & I was glad of a sponge down when I finished working. After all our work the men got orders to make separate dugouts for each man but fortunately I had been living alone all the time in a fine dugout, so had not to make a new one. Rcd a parcel of tobacco & fags from William & acknowledged same. Wounded man arrived from trenches about 12.00 p.m., shot through forearm.

#### *May 6th Thursday*

Spent another day at dressing station but had to give it up as a bad job as water persisted in oozing up through floor. Had two men wounded today but both slight. C & D Coys. go to the trenches tonight to relieve A & B. Been very warm today but cooled down about midday & then had a heavy shower of rain. Good number of aeroplanes going about today also plenty of shells & bullets. The adjutant told me today that the French had pierced the line up South. Getting very tired now & wearying for a rest. It is rumoured we move back for rest on Saturday night.

#### *May 7th Friday*

We started immediately after breakfast to make a new dugout for dressing station & worked very hard all day till about 8.00 p.m. of course we had about 12 men helping us & now we have got a fine place although not quite finished. It was very warm but we kept at it anxious to get it done. We had one or two interruptions with sick parade & such like. I had to get up at 5.00 a.m. & passing the Colonel's dugout saw him making cocoa. He shouted on me & gave me a cup with some biscuits. Got word that Sergeant M<sup>27</sup> had died in Edinburgh.

#### *May 8th Saturday*

We were in the middle of breakfast when we got word that shells had burst over our trenches & stretchers were on their way down. Three had died on the way including our officer<sup>28</sup> & 5 wounded, two seriously. We were kept busy for 1 ½ hrs. Rcd letters from C. Ritchie & M. Rae. We had a pretty heavy bombardment from early morning

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<sup>27</sup> Ambulance Sergeant Millikan died 4 May 1915 and was buried with full military honours

<sup>28</sup> Lieutenant WSS Lyon, Privates Louis Cowan and Robert Affleck

all day. Wrote home acknowledging pipe etc. Nothing could be done but sit in our dugouts. The men having on their equipment with rifles ready.

#### *May 9th Sunday*

Every Sunday since we came up here has been a busy day but this is far the worst. They started shelling us early & we had to run for it about 11.00 a.m., the shells were getting so close. We had several more wounded including my assistant who had his leg blown off.<sup>29</sup> We were away about an hour but returned when things had quietened down. Soon after we got back we got official word that we had pierced the lines near La Bassee<sup>30</sup> [?] & advanced 8 miles & were still advancing. The division has got a wire congratulating the way we have held this part of the line. Two of our platoons were sent into the trenches to help the Gloucesters who had suffered heavily but were relieved by the 1<sup>st</sup> R.S. Things were fairly quiet all night.

#### *May 10th Monday*

We were wakened about 2.00 a.m. to attend to a wounded man but soon dressed him & got back to bed again. Got up about 8.00 a.m. & cooked ham for breakfast after which I had a wash & tidy up. German guns fairly busy this a.m. but the shells are landing good bit beyond. Wrote letters home & then the remainder of the afternoon was spent resting. Went & had tea in the orderly room with Sergeant Major & Sergeant Grant. Then went back & attended to the wounded. Things were very quiet till 11.00 p.m. when there was heavy rapid fire on both sides lasting about 15 minutes. The ambulance people came about 11.00 p.m. & took cases away leaving us plenty room & a stretcher each for the doctor & I to sleep on. A party of Germans about 200 strong were seen on one of the roads dressed in our uniforms & a machine gun was trained on them.

#### *11th May Tuesday*

Had a fairly good night but very cold & no blankets. The bombardment started again at 9.00 a.m. with renewed energy. A few of our men got wounded but were able to go on duty again after being bandaged. Several gas bombs have been used but we have not felt the fumes much as there is a good breeze. Things quietened down in the afternoon & we had a very quiet night, made a few improvements on our dug out but on the whole had a fairly easy day.

#### *12th May Wednesday*

Ambulance came at 12.45 a.m. after which we got to bed but had to get up at 3.00 a.m. for a case & did not go back to bed again. Had one or two cases today but things are very quiet just now. Dinner consisted of boiled ham (given by the Colonel) bread & butter & tea after which we continued our improvements on our little home. About 4.00 p.m. I lay down & had an hour sleep waking in time for tea. Things have been so quiet today we all thought the enemy must be planning some mischief but nothing has happened. An officer was killed today who only came out with the draft on Sunday & went into the trenches yesterday.<sup>31</sup> It has been very close & warm today & we could not work long at a time. Only had 2 stretcher cases today so have been easing off. Splendid news from the South.

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<sup>29</sup> One candidate for this man is David Moore, a dentist, seriously wounded in the right leg 9 May 1915 and died the same day

<sup>30</sup> Battle of Aubers Ridge

<sup>31</sup> Alastair Macfarlane, son of Lord and Lady Ormidale



### *13th May Thursday*

Did not get to bed till 4.30 a.m. owing to ambulance people being late. Had to be up again at 8.00 a.m. Breakfast over we tidied up & had a wash. Very quiet here today very few shells coming from the Germans. Very wet here all day & the roads are ankle deep with mud and it is very cold. Only had 3 cases for the hospital & none of them serious. Our battalion [?brigade] now consists of the 9th Argylls, Durham Light Infantry & ourselves. I was able to get two or three naps during the day which made up for what I lost. C/O Perry<sup>32</sup> came back with several others. The French continue to make very good progress & the British have also done good all along the line. General Joffre has sent congratulations to our brigade for the way we held the enemy back.

### *14th May Friday*

Had a good night's sleep tho' cold. Got up about 8.00 a.m. The rain has stopped but the roads are awful. We have had a fairly easy day but have had several chaps complaining of diarrhoea, only two seriously wounded (one fatal).<sup>33</sup> Remainder of the day was fairly quiet until about 7.00 p.m. & from then till midnight we were kept busy but fortunately none were very serious. I was told by the RSM today that several big guns had been brought into this district yesterday & were doing splendid work. Have been trying to get hot drink for 2 hours but no luck.

### *15th May Saturday*

Had just got stretched out and was very comfortable on a stretcher with 2 blankets when two cases came in. We soon put them right & got down again & were not disturbed again till 7.00 a.m. when we had to get up for breakfast. Splendid day and guns quiet. We were kept at it all afternoon off & on. Having another battalion attached to us makes things a bit brisk at times. Had a nice nap after dinner & before the bizz started. Wrote P. Osborne, Lizzie Rae & N. Lawson. Rcd parcel from home. Got to bed about midnight & were not disturbed until 8.00 a.m.

### *16th May Sunday*

Had a splendid night & good breakfast. Had a sick parade which kept us going till 12.00 p.m. Splendid day, very quiet. Adjutant been down to tell us that the British are only 2 miles from La Basse & going strong. The French are also pushing steadily forward. Our artillery men offer 100 to 1 that the war will be over in 96 hours. Dinner at 1.00 p.m. after which I lay down & slept till 5.00 p.m. This has been the quietest Sunday yet. The Colonel gave a short service but I was left in charge. About 9.00 p.m. the ration parties went off to meet the transport & we had 2 men killed<sup>34</sup> & one or two wounded. We always feel a bit anxious until these parties get back as they have a bad road to go.

### *Monday May 17th*

Got to bed at midnight but could not sleep. Had to get up for wounded man about 2.30 a.m. & did not go back to bed. Had another case about 8.00 a.m. Very wet here all day. Had 3 stretcher cases & 2 walking so far, which took up a good deal of our time. Managed to get a nap in the forenoon & one in the afternoon which made up for what

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<sup>32</sup> Tom Perry. C/O possibly Cadet Officer as he went to cadet school in July

<sup>33</sup> Privates Hugh McGilp and John Meston both killed

<sup>34</sup> Private Ian Hutton and Lance Corporal Alexander McDougall, both of A Company

I had lost. Large number of stray bullets coming over but otherwise things are fairly quiet. At night we had rather a busy time as there were working & ration parties out & we had a few casualties. The total for the day being since 3<sup>rd</sup> till yesterday, we had an average of 9 killed & wounded per day.

#### *Tuesday May 18th*

Only disturbed once during the night & have been quiet all day. Had several sick but mostly cuts & bruises. Had more rain today but faired about dinner time. Received a beautiful canteen from Uncle Tom & a parcel of fags & tobacco from William also letters from Mother & Ella. Spent most of the forenoon improving the entrance to our dugout & succeeded in making it really nice. Part of our division go back for rest tonight but other two regiments besides us are to be left behind & attached to another division. Sgt. Welsh<sup>35</sup> belonging to B Coy. brought in to us seriously wounded.

#### *Wednesday May 19th*

Had to get up at 5.30 a.m. to attend to a wounded man of the D.L.I but went back to bed again till 8.30 a.m. Sick men came in ones & twos all day. The wet weather is causing a lot of suffering to those in the trenches & we had to send two to hospital tonight. We had 2 more casualties of the D.L.I about midday. The rest of the day we had not too much to do so we filled in the spare time by reading, writing & sleeping. This is the first day since we came out that we have had no casualties. Rcd letters from Dad, Mother, Aunt May & Mrs Bowie.

#### *Thursday May 20th*

Our first casualty for the day came in at 3.30 a.m. but I soon dressed him & went back to bed again. Up to dinner time we have had a constant stream of fellows with various complaints. Fell asleep after dinner but only got an hour & a half. This is a perfect day & the guns are very quiet especially the Germans. In the afternoon we had two more stretcher cases, making a total of 4 all together. Received the good news that Italy had declared war.<sup>36</sup> Bearer party came about 10.00 p.m. which allowed us to get to bed about 11.00 p.m. Put in a claim for an extra 6d per day to count back from the time the sergeant was wounded.

#### *Friday May 21st*

I was wakened at 12.30 a.m. to attend to wounded man but soon managed that & was not disturbed till breakfast was ready. About 10.00 a.m. we had 2 stretcher cases & all day have had chaps coming in with various troubles which kept me busy. We had also two other stretcher cases, one an officer in the Artillery & the other a sapper who had been working in our trenches. Both had their leg broken at the thigh by bullet. Recd. parcel from home containing shirt etc. Had a very quiet evening & no more cases. Read & smoked & filled in the time as best we could. Had a chat with one of our artillery men & he told us they had spotted one of the enemy's big guns & intended to put it out of action first thing tomorrow.

#### *Saturday May 22nd*

We had a very peaceful night, only being disturbed by a man who had come to the wrong dressing station. Slept until 9.00 a.m. & had breakfast about 10.30 a.m. A

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<sup>35</sup> Sergeant John Welsh

<sup>36</sup> The Italians entered the war on 23 May 1915

young chap<sup>37</sup> in B Coy. was shot through the head but died before he reached us. This is a lovely day & very warm. We had 2 other men killed but so far no wounded. We are to be relieved tonight & so had a busy afternoon getting packed up. We go 7 miles back & then get a rest & something to eat. One motor bus goes with each company for the benefit of those with bad feet. When the buses had taken on their load they returned & lifted some of us. We got to our destination<sup>38</sup> about 5.00 a.m. & bivouacs made out of blankets ready for the battalion but not for us. However we got in all right. Before leaving two of our men were wounded both stretcher cases.

#### *Sunday May 23rd*

This had been a lovely day with very warm sun. On arrival here our parcels were given out & in many cases the contents were bad & had to be thrown away. I recd. two from home, 1 from Aunt Maggie, 1 from Southport, 1 from Ireland & a number of letters. We were issued with new shirts, socks & anything else we required. We can only just hear the big guns & it is a very pleasant change. The greater part of the day was given up to the resting & devouring the contents of our parcels. We were standing to all day & had everything ready to move.

#### *Monday May 24th*

At 5.00 a.m. we were wakened & got orders to stand to. This we did but carrying on with usual fatigues. At 2.00 p.m. we were told to fall in but this order was cancelled. At 5.00 p.m. we again got orders to fall in & this time went forward marching till 10.00 p.m. We dropped 93 out of 500 men but about 100 joined us again. We were in support, but fortunately our services were not required. We laid down behind a hedge & waited further orders. My feet behaved splendidly & I was able to march all the way altho' the heat was intense & the men were wearing their coats & carrying all their belongings.

#### *Tuesday May 25th*

We returned half way at 10.00 a.m. & rested at a camp. Other two & myself went into a burn for a bathe which was very refreshing. At 3.00 p.m. motor buses arrived to take us further back & when we arrived at our destination we had to erect bivouacs. This done we fell into bed & fell sound asleep. The heat was very great & I went to bed with a bad headache. It is reported that the enemy had broken through by using gas bombs but don't think it was true.

#### *Wednesday May 26th*

Had breakfast about 9.00 a.m. but otherwise just lay about in the shade. One or two aeroplanes going about but otherwise very quiet. After dinner we were kept at it till 9.00 p.m. inspecting feet & attending to those that required it. It was a big job as most of the men had blisters or skinned feet. We had to send several cases to hospital with influenza, jaundice, ruptures & other complaints. Got to bed at 9.00 a.m. but did not fall asleep for a long time.

#### *Thursday May 27th*

Had breakfast at about 9.00 a.m. & at 10.00 a.m. we had sick parade which lasted until 11.00 a.m. After that I was kept busy attending to those with bad feet. I stopped

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<sup>37</sup> Three men killed on this day but probably William Whitley

<sup>38</sup> Busseboom

for dinner at 1.00 p.m. & started again at 2.30 p.m. finishing about 4.00 p.m. Very windy & much cooler today. Spent the remainder of the day resting. Received parcel from home. Just got orders that reveille will be at 5.00 a.m. tomorrow & we have to pack up tonight ready to move as early as possible. Also rcd. parcel of tobacco from Mr C. It is now 8.00 p.m. & I am just preparing for bed.

*Friday May 28th*

We were wakened at 4.30 a.m. & after packing up had a hurried breakfast & started on the road at 6.00 a.m. We marched about 7 miles through beautiful country & arrived at our destination<sup>39</sup> at 10.00 a.m. & had another breakfast. About halfway after having a rest, the band of another corps offered to play to us so far. The offer was readily accepted & made a great difference to the marching. We erected temporary bivouacs & rested the greater part of the day. Had sick parade at 7.00 p.m. but it was a very small one. Turned in at 8.00 p.m.

*Saturday May 29th*

Reveille at 3.45 a.m. Marched about 7 miles in Southerly direction & arrived at our destination at 9.00 a.m. Had another breakfast & then prepared for sick parade. We are billeted in a farm but the men are bivouacked in a field close by. Passed through 3 large towns on the way which had not been touched by shells & were still inhabited by civilians. The sergeant Pisner [pioneer?] & myself have erected a bivouac to sleep in tonight as it is much nicer than indoors. We are only in hearing distance of the guns but expect to be nearer tomorrow.

*May 30th, Sunday*

Spent a very comfortable night in the open & slept well. Got up at 8.00 a.m. & had ham & eggs for breakfast. Then washed & shaved & prepared for sick parade at 10.30 a.m. At 12.00 p.m. we had an open air service conducted by a minister<sup>40</sup> who used to be with the 9th Argylls but is attached to us now. Dinner at 1.30 p.m. consisted of stew & potatoes followed by stewed rhubarb which was very fine. After dinner we got orders to be ready to move at 4.00p.m & so we had to start right away & pack up. Rcd. lovely parcel & letter from Uncle Robert. Also letter from home. We had to march about 7 miles passing through villages & towns which were still occupied by civilians & business going on as usual. We arrived here at 7.30 p.m. & just fell into bed. We are in a hospital & very comfortable with every convenience.

*May 31st Monday*

We were roused at 7.00 a.m. & got up & washed before breakfast. Held sick parade at 10.30 a.m. & had a few with bad feet. Our room when tidied up looks quite like a dispensary. The remainder of the day was spent in reading, writing & resting. At night we had a concert in the recreation room which was very much appreciated. 50% of the battalion were allowed out on pass in the afternoon but I preferred to stay in & rest so let the other 2 go out. Rcd. parcel of clean clothes from home & acknowledged same. I have been recommended for paid L/Cpl. which means 3d per day on to my pay. Turned in about 9.00 p.m.

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<sup>39</sup> 28 May to Dranoutre, 29 May to Steenwerck, 30 May to Armentières

<sup>40</sup> Reverend Colonel William Beveridge

### *June 1st Tuesday*

Got up at 7.00 a.m. & washed & shaved before breakfast. The battalion are having physical drill in the yard for an hour. Splendid weather & not too warm. Sick parade over I was practically free all day. Made alterations in the staff by sending the chap who acted as guide back to company & taking on a dentist. Got my correspondence up to date so have an easy conscience. Was put in orders as paid L/Cpl & also got 6d per day more for extra work on medical staff. Sat reading until about 8.00 p.m. then prepared for bed.

### *June 2nd Wednesday*

Reveille at 7.00 a.m. washed & shaved before breakfast. Sick parade at 10.00 a.m. which only took up about 1 ½ hours. Had a beautiful dinner of beefsteak pie & mashed potatoes followed by boiled rice & tinned fruit. In the afternoon I lay down & had a fine sleep. About 4.30 p.m. I had all ready to have a nice bath when a shell landed at the foot of that part of the building I was in. I did not hear it because it did not burst but I heard the chaps rush down stairs & only then found out what the trouble was. I suppose about ½ dozen landed in the town but did little damage.

### *June 3rd Thursday*

Very little doing today. The men have had 1 hour physical drill & ½ hr interval & then 1 hour musketry drill. Weather still splendid & everybody looking the better of the rest. At 12.00 p.m. we had to fall in for a muster roll call & the Colonel came round & inspected us & said our clothing was very good considering what we had come through. After dinner I lay down & had a nap. After that I intended going out for a short time but just as I was ready the doctor's servant arrived to say he wanted to see me. I went up to his room & found him in bed with a temp of 104°. He sent me to field ambulance to get a doctor to see him. Number of aeroplanes fly about tonight.

### *June 4th Friday*

Physical drill from 9.00-10 a.m., musketry from 10-11.00 a.m. At 10.30 a.m. I had to attend an enquiry about the stuff that was blown up in the bombardment of Ypres. New doctor<sup>41</sup> came this morning & is a pretty old man & did not leave a very startling impression. Had broth for dinner, meat & potatoes & stewed rhubarb. Rcd. p.c from Uncle Tom also joint letter to Tom & I from Nessie Lawson along with gingerbread & sweets. From 12 o'clock noon today we were off divisional reserve and there are many different rumours as to what is to happen to us next. Two coys. went for a hot bath today & other two with details go tomorrow. Still splendid weather.

### *June 5th Saturday*

Got up earlier than usual & washed & shaved before breakfast. Two coys. went to the baths at 7.45 a.m. but the details are to go on Monday. Sick parade at 10.00 a.m. but only had 2 coys. Had one case of Enteric but was diagnosed at hospital. The chap having been sent there a week ago. After dinner I went along to see the doctor taking a parcel with me which had just arrived, but was just in time to see him being put into an ambulance before being taken down the line to one of the base hospitals. In the forenoon Aymer came in and chatted for about half an hour. Rcd. letters from Dad & Mother & acknowledged same. Much cooler tonight & very pleasant. Turned in about 9.00 p.m.

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<sup>41</sup> Unknown, departed next day

### *June 6th Sunday*

Breakfast over we prepared for sick parade & got a pleasant surprise by the appearance of another new doctor.<sup>42</sup> This time we have a good man & a nice one. At 12.00 p.m. we had church parade in front of the barracks conducted by our own minister. After dinner I had a good 2 hours nap. Tea at 5.00 p.m. After which rest of the evening was spent in reading & writing. Part of the battalion went off to the trenches at 7.00 p.m. to do fatigue work till 12.00 a.m. Had Tom in for about an hour & had a nice chat.

### *June 7th Monday*

Had to get up at 6.00 a.m. today & after some trouble owing to the water being turned off all over the town, I managed to wash & shave. We held half our sick parade at 10.00 a.m. but had to stop at 10.40 a.m. owing to an inspection by the General<sup>43</sup> of the new corps we are attached to. I was in charge of the stretcher bearers & medical staff. The inspection lasted about an hour & gave the General a good impression. After which we finished sick parade. I slept most of the afternoon & read & wrote letters in the evening. Terribly close & warm so much so that chaps were going about with hardly any clothes on.

### *June 8th Tuesday*

Breakfast at 8.00 a.m. & sick parade at 10.00 a.m. 1.30 p.m. went with C Coy. & had a fine swim in a river a short distance away. Thunder & lightening & heavy rain came on just as we were, but did not last long. Got back about 3.30 p.m. Made tea after which we started to pack up ready for the trenches. The whole building had to be clear by 6.00 p.m. so we had our work cut out. From then till 9.00 p.m. we had to be out in the yard & wait. The 1<sup>st</sup> Argylls are taking our place & 2 M.S goes to their billet also C Coy & D Coy. We left billets about 9.30 p.m. along with Colonel, Adjutant & headquarter's staff & after 45 minutes walk arrived at our new quarters.<sup>44</sup> We are in a farmhouse, splendid cellars & headquarters are close by.

### *June 9th Wednesday*

We had a long lie till 8.00 a.m. & after breakfast spent all forenoon cleaning our new digs & arranging things to our own liking. We had spring mattresses to sleep on & a stove to cook on & are most comfortable. In the trenches the fellows are also very comfortable with rainproof dugouts. They have also a piano & other luxuries. We can go to & from the trenches at any time by a long communication trench. Everything goes on as if there was no war going on. Children running about & men & women doing their daily work. We can also get milk, butter & eggs. We have to attend the civilians here as they have no doctor. Sat reading till about 11.00 p.m. & then turned in.

### *June 10th Thursday*

About 1.00 a.m. we got a phone message saying a man had been wounded while out scouting between the trenches & was on the way down. It turned out to be E. [J?]

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<sup>42</sup> Lieutenant John Falkiner RAMC

<sup>43</sup> Major General Pulteney

<sup>44</sup> Chapelle d'Armentières

Young's brother<sup>45</sup> & was wounded through the arm at the elbow. We soon got him dressed & made comfortable & I stayed with him until the ambulance came at 10.00 a.m. After he was away I lay down & made up for the sleep I had lost. In the afternoon we had the men down from the trenches to see the doctor but none of them ailed much. Things are very quiet here & there is nothing much else to do but read & write & smoke. Went off to bed about 10.00 p.m. feeling rather tired.

*June 11th Friday*

Had a long lie till 9.00 a.m. then got up & had breakfast after which we tidied up & then had a wash. Before dinner I had a cold bath which was very refreshing. In the afternoon we had a few men down from the trenches with various troubles but only one went to hospital. The guns have been very quiet all day & one would hardly think there was a war going on. We got the good news today that so many at a time have to get 7 days leave & I am among the first lot. The transport came up at 9.00 p.m. with rations & the Germans must have heard them as they sent over three small shells but did no harm. Had a bite of supper about 10.00 p.m. then off to bed.

*June 12th Saturday*

Had a very quiet day & if it had not been for one or two chaps from the trenches we would have had nothing to do. One or two aeroplanes were flying about but on the whole things were very quiet. Tom Perry came from the trenches & we had a fine long chat. Had a very good dinner consisting of steak & onions which we cooked ourselves. Received a nice parcel from Mrs Bowie of Edinburgh Rock & two batteries & a bulb for flash lamp.

[The first diary ends with 'ON LEAVE']

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<sup>45</sup> The wounded man is most likely William P Young, his brother James Roy Stephen Young was also in the battalion

**Second Diary**  
**29<sup>th</sup> June 1915 to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1915**

*June 29th Tuesday [1915]*

Since returning from leave on 19<sup>th</sup> we have had very little to do. Since coming to these trenches we have had 5 casualties, 2 of which belonged to another regiment. Sunday night the 27<sup>th</sup> we moved about 1,000 yards further down the line & are now in a dugout situated about halfway up the communication trench. It is a good sized dugout & a good stove, tables & chairs & nearly everything we require. We have made one or two improvements & if we stay here long we shall be able to make it a very nice place. It has been very wet here all day & the roads & trenches are in an awful mess. Recd. a card from General Snow thanking me for my services at St Jean.

*June 30th Wed*

Got up about 8.00 a.m. & made breakfast consisting of ham & eggs after which we tidied up the dugout, between 10.00 & 11.00 a.m. we had a very heavy shower of rain which flooded the dugout. This was caused by the floor of the dugout being about a foot below the level of the trench. After the rain was over we were kept busy till 7.30 p.m. making drains & other improvements to prevent another flooding. In the afternoon we had a visit from the Colonel & Adjutant but they did not stay long. The doctor was in town all day. Wrote a letter to William and received one from Mother. Had a cup of coffee about 10.00 p.m. & then off to bed.

*July 1st Thursday*

About 4.00 a.m. we gave the enemy over 105 shells. There must have been some damage as this has been an exceptionally quiet day. We got up about 7.30 a.m. & while the breakfast was getting ready two of us busied ourselves sorting up the dugout. Our breakfast was a very plain meal as we had no ham or eggs. Next we continued our work on the dugout till 12.00 p.m. In the afternoon we took a half holiday & paid a visit to some of our friends. For tea we had boiled eggs after which we wrote a letter & read books until 9.30 p.m. when we had to go up for rations. A cup of coffee & then off to bed. Received paper from William.

*July 2nd Friday*

On getting up this morning we found the fire had gone out. This was very annoying as we are not allowed to make any smoke & coke is bad to light without coal. However with a great deal of perseverance we managed to get it going and got our breakfast of ham & eggs about 11.00 a.m. The doctor asked me to make a shelf in his dugout & this took me nearly 2 hours owing to want of tools. The enemy has sent several shells into our reserve trenches but have not done much damage. Lovely day & very warm. Received letter from Dad & wrote & acknowledged same. About 8.00 p.m. not feeling in a mood for reading I lay down but could not sleep so got up & had a bath. Between 6.00 & 7.00 p.m. 2 or 3 aeroplanes came over & the chaps in the trenches got some sport but nothing happened. Turned in at 10.30 p.m.

*July 3rd Saturday*

Had a very busy day. Immediately after breakfast we started to build a small dugout at the back of the dressing station large enough for two of us to sleep in. There is hardly room in the station for four. It was terribly warm & the sweat just poured off



me. We had no dinner but high tea consisting of chips & roast beef. I had a walk round the trenches with the doctor & was nearly dead when I got back. Had a fine feed of cherries which we gathered off a tree in the trench. A French aeroplane flew over tonight & stayed in the district for about half an hour, the enemy firing at him all the time. The two companies in the trenches were relieved tonight by the two companies that were resting in town. Went up for our rations at 9.30 p.m. & then made a cup of tea. Received papers from William.

#### *July 4th Sunday*

We made this a holiday & did nothing except what was necessary. It was terribly hot, worse than the previous day. If one moved the sweat simply poured off one. We just lay in the shade just reading & sleeping. Things were very quiet except for occasional little duels between the artillery or an aeroplane flying about. We ate very little all day but had a good meal at night. The Colonel, Adjutant & orderly room staff went back to town but we preferred to stay where we were. Received slippers from Dad also a nice long letter & a pipe from Aunt Maggie. Waited to see the rations in then off to bed.

#### *July 5th Monday*

After a very restless night owing to the heat, I got up at 7.30 a.m. & messed about doing odd jobs till breakfast time. Unfortunately the fire went out during the night, so we had to content ourselves with bread & butter & jam for the next three meals because we could not light it again until dark. All day we have been busy making the new dugout but it is slow work when there are only four of us. Wrote letters to Dr Matthew, Nessie Lawson & Uncle Robert. Had a walk up the trench tonight. Had a chat with some of my pals. Guns have been fairly quiet all day but both sides keep popping at one another. Had J. [T?] Perry in for about half an hour & enjoyed his chat. Turned in at 11.00 p.m.

#### *July 6th Tuesday*

This has been the most unfortunate day yet. When we got up we found the fire out & when we tried the primus it would not work but after an hour's bother we got it going in a way. We have been busy all day on our new dugout but it is hard work especially in the heat of the day. Have had more sick today than any other day since we came here. There has been heavy artillery firing on our right all day but some distance away. Received tuck box from home. About 10.00 p.m. we had thunder & lightning & heavy rain. Wrote long letter to dad & then turned in.

#### *July 7th Wednesday*

Managed to keep the fire in all night but had to get up twice during the night but it was worth it. It was much cooler but rather windy & we had several heavy showers which prevented us doing much to our new dugout. The afternoon between 4 & 6 p.m. the Germans sent over a good number of small shells without doing much damage. One chap got hurt by sandbags falling on top of him & had to be sent to hospital. Got another new doctor<sup>46</sup> today the other being withdrawn & he seems a very nice fellow. This is the fifth now. Rcd letter from Mother & P.C from Uncle Tom & wrote P.Cs to Lizzie Rae & Uncle Tom & Granny.

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<sup>46</sup> John Falkiner was transferred to Indian Corps, the new doctor was Lieutenant JT Dickson RAMC. A Dr Dixon, now with Royal Irish, mentioned 30 September 1915

*July 8th Thursday*

Had breakfast about 8.00 a.m. consisting of ham, bread & butter & tea. We had only a small sick parade after which the doctor gave a lecture to the stretcher bearers. Not feeling fit for dinner we gave that meal a miss. Still very quiet here & hope it will continue so. Had to empty the water pits at each end of the dugout to prevent flooding. Wrote Mother a long letter to Huddersfield. Had a walk up to Headquarters to see what was going on. After tea we started to throw more earth on to the top of the dugout to try to make it shrapnel proof. Another walk to headquarters for the rations.

*Friday 9th July*

Unfortunately we slept in this morning & were wakened by the doctor knocking on the door. Had ham & eggs for breakfast & tidied up the dugout. The doctor went down town to inspect the billets & Brown went on leave. This left me by myself until about 3.00 p.m. when Trotter<sup>47</sup> returned from hospital. I had a bath & did some more digging by way of exercise. Very quiet here but they still keep shelling the town. The companies are being relieved again tonight but we still stay on. The Colonel & Adjutant looked in on their way up & asked if we were all well. We got decent fags with our rations tonight but only 16. Received letter from Aunt Marie.

*Saturday July 10th*

Unfortunately our fire was out when we got up this morning & although I tried for half an hour to light it I had to give in. However was working all right today so got ham & eggs after all. In the forenoon we made a bath by digging a hole & then covering it with a waterproof sheet. This was tested out & proved to be a great success. Received letters from Mother, Aunt Lottie, Uncle Robert & Dr Matthew, also paper from William. We had a very lazy afternoon till teatime. The Company RMS [?CSM] came in & stayed for tea. After tea I went up the trench for a walk & saw some of my friends. Got the fire going after dark.

*Sunday July 11th*

This has been a real Sunday, very quiet & we have done nothing all day except read, write & play cards! Had breakfast at 9.00 a.m., after which I washed & shaved. About 10.30 a.m. we had three men down to see the doctor & one was sent to hospital. After dinner I wrote a long letter home & then played cards (patience). until tea time. Spent most of the evening reading & went for the rations at 9.30 p.m. Received parcel from Uncle Robert containing cigarettes, matches, figs, tin of fruit & sweets. Turned in about 10.30 p.m. Much cooler here today but very pleasant. The doctor did not come in till 12.30 a.m. as he had been up at the firing line with the Colonel & Adjutant so I had to keep awake until he came.

*Monday July 12th*

When we got up the fire was out & owing to a strong wind we were unable to light it again. The stove also refused to burn so we had to get water for the tea boiled elsewhere. Dug a new refuse pit & filled in the old one. Had one or two sick men & sent one to hospital. Dinner at 1.30 p.m. consisting of sardines & bread & butter. Wrote to Willie Allan & rcd p.c from Uncle Adam. Went for a walk up to

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<sup>47</sup> Alfred Charles Trotter, born in India, dental student

headquarters & spent the rest of the evening reading & playing cards. I managed to get the fire going after dark & as we had had nothing since dinner, I made poached eggs & toast for supper.

#### *Tuesday July 13th*

Rose at 8.00 a.m., lit the fire & made ham & eggs for breakfast after which we tidied up the place then washed & shaved. Had one or two men down from the trench with cuts etc. Two chaps came to be examined for commissions. Dinner at 1.30 p.m. consisting of the usual cold beef, tea, bread & butter. In the afternoon I had a lovely hot bath in our home-made bath & change of socks & shirt. Wrote to Auntie Marie then had a game at cards. A chap at the trench sprained his ankle & had to go to hospital. Made supper, same as last night. Went for rations & then played cards for another hour. The artillery on both side have been exchanging shots all day. One or two aeroplanes flying about. Four new officers arrived & were posted one to each company.

#### *Wednesday July 14th*

Got up about 8.00 a.m. & lit the fire & made breakfast. Washed & shaved then had two men down to have cuts dressed. Washed a shirt & pair of socks. Had dinner about 2.00 p.m. & then lay down for a while. All day heavy guns have been firing away to our right. We were rather surprised to hear a sudden burst of rapid fire about 7.00 p.m. but found out afterwards that it was caused by the Camerons firing a new gun they had got up. Played cards till it was time to go up for rations. On the dumping ground one of the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Scots was hit through the arms & we brought him down to our station. Rain came on very heavy about 5.00 p.m. & has never stopped since. Received letters from Mother & Dad & Dr Bowie.

#### *Thursday July 15th*

Rose about 8.00 a.m. washed & shaved. We had only 4 patients this morning so soon got parade over. Went on the hunt for coke as we had run short but no luck. Played cards for about an hour & then wrote letter to Mother. Had dinner about 1.30 p.m. It has been fine all day so far but is getting dull again. I was up & down to headquarters two or three times for messages but enjoyed the walk. Most of the afternoon was taken up with reading writing & sleeping. After tea we played cards till about 8.00 p.m. when I lit the fire. C & D Coys. are being relieved tonight by A & B. Both sides have been remarkably quiet all day. Rations came up at 9.30 p.m. then a bit of supper & off to bed.

#### *Friday July 16th*

One of our men attached to Brigade Pioneers was wounded late last night & died a few minutes after getting to our station.<sup>48</sup> We had a long lie this morning & did not get breakfast till 9.30 a.m. We had one or two sick men down with bad [?]. They kept me busy for about an hour. Saw Trotter for a few minutes when we were going up to H'quarters. Aymer came down to see me just before dinner. It has been very wet & still continues. Had a visit from the S.M. & Sgt G. Received box of cakes from Holmfoot. I made poached eggs on toast for supper after which we had a game of cards and we were getting ready for bed when one of the 1st Royals was brought

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<sup>48</sup> Pioneer James Swan

in. He had fallen into a trench & burst his chest. He was on the same job as the man who was killed last night.

#### *Saturday July 17th*

Went through the usual routine & were just finishing breakfast when Brown returned from his leave. Of course we had to get all the news & it was about 12.00 p.m. before we started to tidy up. Dinner about 1.30 p.m. consisted of chips & cold beef. Had a couple of chaps from B Coy. to see Brown & get the news. Wrote letters to Mother & Holmfoot. The Col. paid us a visit but only stayed a few minutes. Tea at 6.00 p.m. was a great treat with plenty of cakes. Played cards nearly all night. After tea the S.M & Sgt A. paid us a visit & stayed about half an hour. Went for rations, then settled down for the night. Been a very miserable day, cold, wet & windy. Rcd papers from William, box of scones from Lizzie Rae & invitation from Ella.

#### *Sunday July 18th*

After breakfast we started to put more earth on the top of our dugout & continued all day. It has been a lovely day & the work was pretty hard. Dinner at 2.30 p.m. consisted of boiled beef & boiled potatoes & fruit. We gave tea a miss & about 9.00 p.m. had poached eggs on toast. Rcd. letter from Mother with snaps. Rations came about 9.00 p.m. after which we played cards till 11.00 p.m. 2nd half of the battalion came up tonight & went into the firing line. Plenty of artillery up now so we are ready for anything. Looks as if they are preparing for something on the other side but we are doing the same.

#### *Monday July 19th*

Had another heavy day on same job as yesterday but it is finished & we are much the better for the exercise. Had a fine hot bath after we finished & a change of shirt & socks. Did not have breakfast till 10.00 a.m. so saved a meal & had tea about 7.00 p.m. Wrote letter to Mother, John Scott & Dr Matthew. This has been a perfect day & fairly quiet. Had a visit from John [?Tom] Perry this afternoon & chatted for about an hour. Sent watch to Joe. After tea we played cards till ration time. Then had a little supper & turned in. After the doctor saw what a good job we had made of our dugout he asked us to put more earth on the roof of his little place.

#### *Tuesday July 20th*

Got up about 9.00 a.m. & lit the fire & while Trotter made breakfast. I pulled down a little dugout. After breakfast I made a table out of the wood & with the corrugated iron supported the sides of our dugout which were falling in. Had a few sick men to attend to & sent one to hospital. Our guns are doing a lot of firing but getting no reply. Wrote letter to Lizzie Rae then had a walk up to headquarters & had a chat with S.M & Sgt R. had tea after which we played cards till 10.00 p.m. Rcd. letter from Aunty Maggie & acknowledged same also parcel from home.

#### *Wednesday July 21st*

Spent the whole forenoon making a new refuse pit while Trotter did a big washing consisting of two shirts, two towels, two pairs socks & handkerchiefs. Dinner at 1.30 p.m. after which I lay down & slept till tea time at 5.00 p.m. after which we made one or two improvements inside our dugout & then went out & finished the roof. Received letters from Dad & Mother. Had a walk to the support to see some of my pals before they were relieved by the other two companies. Germans shelled our front trench but did no harm. Four men got bruised by stones but were able for duty. Our

guns been going all day but got few replies. One or two aeroplanes flying about but soon disappeared when we started firing. This has been a perfect day & very warm.

#### *Thursday July 22nd*

The 3 hours sleep I had yesterday afternoon spoilt me when I went to bed. I struggled to get to sleep till 1.00 a.m. but without success so I got up & read for half an hour & then wrote a long letter to Mother. I lay down again at 3.00 a.m. & succeeded in falling asleep. I got up about 8.30 a.m. & had breakfast & then washed & shaved. Sick parade lasted about half an hour after which I wrote to Cousin Wilson. Had a walk up to Hqrtrs then came back & had dinner. The afternoon was taken up with odd jobs & after tea we played cards for about an hour then read books till ration time. Heavy bombardment going on on our right but some distance away. Rain came on about 6.00 p.m. but not very heavy.

#### *Friday July 23rd*

After breakfast rain came on very heavy & continued on & off all day thus spoiling us from making any improvements outside or getting any exercise. It has been a most miserable long day. Nothing to do but read, write, eat & sleep & to make matters worse we had no sick to attend to. The doctor has been away in town all day & I was left in charge. At 4.00 p.m. all our guns fired one round each & nearly frightened us out of our wits. What it was for nobody seems to know for certain. Received letters from Mother & Nessie & 100 fags from Mr Currie. Played cards all night till ration time.

#### *Saturday July 24th*

It was after 9.00 a.m. before we got up & then had trouble with the fire owing to the coke being damp. It was very wet all forenoon & so we were prisoners but it faired up after dinner & we had a very busy afternoon clearing out the communication trench below the floorboards as it had got filled up. It was hard work but good exercise & we were dead tired when we finished about 6.00 p.m. A good tea with ham & eggs soon put us alright again. In the evening I wrote a letter to Mother & a p.c to Mr Currie. I expected papers from William but was disappointed. Very quiet here today.

#### *Sunday 25th July*

This has been a real Day of Rest & we have done absolutely nothing but eat, read, write & sleep. The guns were also very quiet, in fact if it had not been for the occasional shot we should have thought the war was over. In the afternoon we had a visit from B. Coy 2 in C[?] who gave Trotter & me our pay of 40 francs each. I received an invitation from Tom Perry<sup>49</sup> to attend a farewell supper he was giving so I immediately got ready & after getting a pass went down. I was a little late & the place as Chairman intended for me was taken by another fellow but I was given the honour of proposing the toast to Tom. I got back about 10.00 p.m. after a very jolly evening. Rcd. papers from William.

#### *Monday 26th July*

Today has been another lazy day & all we have done is lay out in the sun. We had a fine bread pudding for dinner & it was very enjoyable. About 12.00 p.m. the

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<sup>49</sup> Tom Perry went to officer cadet school in St Omer 26 July 1915

Germans started sending over Whizz Bangs & continued right on till about 3.00 p.m. I repaired one of our stretchers then lay down for an hour. Lovely day & very warm. After tea I wrote a long letter to Nessie Lawson & then played cards till ration time. Had a visit this afternoon from the minister.

#### *Tuesday 27th July*

It has been raining through the night & still looks very watery. Connolly the doctor's servant went off on leave & Brown is off to play in the Divisional band & Trotter & I are left alone. Received tobacco & cigarettes from William. Had dinner about 2.00 p.m. & then played cards till about 4.00 p.m. Had a lovely hot bath & a change of underclothing. We were just in the middle of tea when we got a message that one of our men had been hit but the poor chap<sup>50</sup> was dead before we could do anything. Wrote a long letter to mother. C & D Coy. were relieved by A & B Coy. tonight.

#### *Wednesday 28th July*

Trotter got up & attended to the doctor & made breakfast, wakening me when it was ready. After we had washed & shaved, tidied up the place we had to go for water. Wrote letter to Ella. Trotter went off to town to do some messages & did not get back until about 5.00 p.m. We had a nice little tea party consisting of Orderly Room clerk Sgt. A., Trotter & myself of course the visitors brought the cakes. After tea we played cards till bedtime only stopping for rations. Between 7.00 & 8.00 p.m. we heard rapid fire on our right for about 10 mins but we do not know what caused it. Rcd. letter & parcel from home & acknowledged it.

#### *Thursday 29th July*

Had breakfast about 8.30 a.m. & invited a corporal in charge of civilians to join us. After the dishes were washed & the place tidied up we seemed to be finished till dinnertime. We spent the whole of the afternoon reading, writing & playing cards for want of something better to do. Every body else seems to have been doing the same as we hardly heard a shot. Had tea about 5.00 p.m. after which I had a walk up & down the trenches for about half an hour. This has been a perfect day & nice & cool. Received fresh blankets from 81<sup>st</sup> Field ambulance & sent old ones back to 2MS. [?QMS] Went for rations at 9.00 p.m. then played till 11.00 p.m. Just as we were preparing for bed 2 or 3 Whizz Bangs came right over our dugout.

#### *Friday 30th July*

Had to get up very early with a bad attack of diarrhoea & nasty pain in my side. I spoke to the doctor about them & he told me what to take. The C.O. on hearing that I was not feeling well came down to see me & told me to take things easy. This has been a lovely day with fine breeze. Played cards nearly all afternoon. Had a visit from A.D.M.S who took the doctor round the trenches to inspect them. He seemed very bad to please in fact nothing satisfied him. He downed the Vernal Spray & we had to clean it out & put fresh solution in to it & take it back. After the rations came up we played cards again for 1 ½ hours. Received papers from William.

#### *Saturday 31st July*

Feeling much better today & pain gone. Slept in till 8.30 a.m. & doctor was late for breakfast. Another fine day & nothing much to do except prepare for the kick up

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<sup>50</sup> Private Thomas Wellwood

tonight. C.O been down to see me again this morning. We messed about doing odd jobs till dinnertime. After which we had a few chaps down from the fire trench to get their respirators repaired. Played cards till tea time then waited for the bombardment to begin. Received letter from Mother. At 6.00 p.m. the bombardment began & for 1 ½ hours our guns blazed away doing a good deal of damage but only getting a feeble reply. At 10.00 p.m. they had another blatter but it only lasted 5 mins. We had no casualties.

#### *Sunday 1st August*

Rose at 8.30 a.m. & made breakfast after which we washed the dishes & then ourselves. had one or two down to see the doctor. Played cards till dinner time. Had walk up to headquarters to arrange about shifting. Wrote to Mother then lay down & read till tea time. One of our friends from "B" Coy came down & stayed for tea. The Canadian Officers were round looking at trenches & called here as well. They take over from us tomorrow . Washed the tea dishes then settled down for a quiet read & a smoke. Went for rations at 9.00 p.m. & then played cards till 11.30 p.m. Recd. parcel from Galashields also watch back from Joe Anderson.

#### *Monday 2nd August*

I got up about 7.30 a.m. & made ham & eggs for breakfast. Then washed & shaved. Rather a large sick parade which took up our time till 11.30 a.m. Sat down & read till dinner time after which we were busy all afternoon getting ready to move. Fatigue party came about 8.00 p.m. & took all our stuff away, then we had to sit & look at each other till 10.30 p.m. Rain came on very heavy about 8.00 p.m. & still continues. At 10.30 p.m. the transport came & we had to go & load our cart, then another wait till midnight before we got started.

#### *Tuesday 3rd August*

We arrived at the rest camp<sup>51</sup> at about 2.30 a.m. only to find that the medical staff had been forgotten & there was no bivouac for us. Eventually we got squeezed in beside some other chaps & fell asleep as soon as we got down & slept soundly till 8.30 a.m. After breakfast we were provided with canvas which was anything but waterproof & erected a bivouac. It took us nearly all day & we had some very heavy showers. After a good tea & a rest we felt all right but about 7.00 p.m. very heavy rain came on & soaked everything but that counts for nothing on active service & we had to go to bed as we were.

#### *Wednesday 4th August*

It rained very heavy all night & we were nearly drowned but slept soundly through it all. We have made arrangements with the Sgt. cook to get our meals from the cook house & it saves us a great deal of trouble. We had to pull down our bivouac & with the assistance of the Pioneer Sgt made another. The new one is a beauty & very comfortable. We had 30 on sick parade which took up a good deal of our time. Most of the afternoon was taken up cleaning up the mess we had made & getting things into order again. After tea we took things easy. Received letters from home, Aunt Maggie & P.C from Uncle Tom. This has been a splendid day altho' we had one shower in the forenoon. Turned in about 9.00 p.m.

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<sup>51</sup> Erquinghem

#### *Thursday August 5th*

Got up at 8.00 a.m. & washed shaved before breakfast. Sick parade was bigger than yesterday but we got through it about 11.00 a.m. Wrote letters till dinner time, after which we messed about till about 3.30 p.m. when we went down to hear the new Divisional Band & stayed until 4.30 p.m. then came back & had tea & prepared to go out on pass from 6.00 - 8.00 p.m. The village is not far away but nothing much to see. However we had a good feed & did a little shopping & got back about 9.15 p.m. feeling very tired. Received parcel from home & acknowledged same. Turned in at 9.00 p.m. Saw Dr Haddon & he told me he was coming to us on Tuesday.

#### *Friday August 6th*

Slept soundly all night & rose at 7.30 a.m. feeling much refreshed. Sick parade at 9.30 a.m. was even bigger than previous days so we were kept busy till nearly 12 noon. Sent 4 men to hospital with various complaints. Had several very heavy showers but our bivouac is quite waterproof. Wrote letters to Uncle Tom & Uncle John & then lay down for a couple of hours, after which we started testing water with a new apparatus we had sent but had not all the chemicals. After tea we went down to see a football match between our "B" Coy. & "B" Coy. of the Camerons. When we got back we both felt rather frisky & chased each other round & round the field till we were nearly dead.

#### *Saturday August 7th*

Slept very soundly after our strenuous exertions. After breakfast we washed & shaved. The sick parade was hardly so large but then there were no parades. Two men were sent to hospital. I had a game at football for about half an hour then went for a swim in the canal. After dinner I lay down for an hour then went over to the company lines for pay. Rested till teatime then went for a walk with Trotter along the road. Each company went for a route march before dinner & in the afternoon the held football matches.

#### *Sunday 8th August*

Very dull & warm but with breeze. One man sent to hospital. Attended church parade at 11.15 a.m. & had a very nice sermon, after which we had dinner of stew & plum duff. Played football in the afternoon till ration time, then rested till teatime. At 5.00 p.m. Medical Staff, Orderly Room & Post Office played a football match against the Pioneers & beat them 2-1. Came back & watched a match between Lieutenants & men. The men winning easily. Went through the stretcher bearers' bags & saw that each had the required number of bandages. Went to bed about 8.30 p.m. dead tired.

#### *Monday 9th August*

I was wakened between 2 & 3.00 a.m. by hearing a very heavy bombardment up near Ypres which had lasted some hours. Very warm, in fact too warm to move almost. Sick parade was soon over but we had a suspected case of enteric. Messed about doing odd jobs till dinnertime. Sent dirty clothes to wash. Did an experiment testing the water then lay down for an hour before going for a hot bath. Had a lovely bath then haircut & shave. Received letter from Nessie & a paper from Cissy Wilson also a parcel from Dad. Trotter & I went for a short walk, then had a hot drink & turned in. Aymer came down & we drank Ella's health. (Her wedding day)



### *Tuesday 10th August*

Had breakfast at 7.30 a.m. then washed & shaved & tidied the bivouac. Sick parade at 9.30 a.m. was smaller than usual & only one man for hospital. Went down to the river & had a lovely swim. It was too hot to take meat for dinner so we had a tin of pears instead. Wrote a long letter home & then attended a lecture on First Aid by the doctor. I being the model. Received a P.C from Ella from Liverpool. At 4.30 p.m. we had tea & enjoyed the bride's cake very much. Went for rations with Trotter. Spent the rest of the evening playing cards etc. Turned in at 9.00 p.m. Sir Douglas Haig visited the camp & spoke to us. His body guard was of the 17th Lancers.

### *Wednesday 11th August*

Everybody was very busy preparing for the sports. – a very small sick parade. Went for a fine swim & felt very much refreshed. Got back about 1.00 p.m. with a fine appetite for dinner. After dinner we got washed & dressed for the sports. They were a great success & besides flat racing, we had tug of war & a boxing tournament. The divisional band also came down & gave us a very nice program. We finished about 6.30 p.m. after which we had tea & then Trotter & I went for a walk. When I got back I went along to see Aylmer & gave him your [?] message. We walked up & down the road for about ½ hour talking about old times. He gave me one of his fine electric lamps. Rcd. letter from home.

### *Thursday 12th August*

We had to be up at 7.00 a.m. & breakfast was at 7.30 a.m. Terribly warm & no air. After sick parade we were feeling rather hungry so we made some tea & had a couple of boiled eggs each & then went for a swim which was most refreshing. Got back in time for dinner but it was too hot to eat so gave it a bye. We spent the afternoon trying to find a cool place to lie down but were not very successful. After tea we went to see a football match between men of our battalion & the Camerons. We lost 2-0. Played cards till 9.30 p.m. then had a bite of supper & off to bed. Rcd. letter & p.c from Ella.

### *Friday 13th August*

This morning the sick parade was at 8.45 a.m. because the doctor was going up to the trenches, we are going too on Monday to see the dressing station. Two men for hospital & after I saw them away I went for a swim. Dinner got a bye as it was too hot to eat. At 3.00 p.m. we went for a hot bath & enjoyed it thoroughly, coming back we had tea in the village & a good feed. Got back about 6.00 p.m. & found one or two patients waiting to see me. Had a game of cards till 9.00 p.m. & then turned in. Wrote a long letter to Mother.

### *Saturday 14th August*

Much cooler today & a fine breeze. After sick parade was over I went for a swim. Dinner of mince & spuds was very good. Went over medicines & instruments with Dr Haddon & ordered some new ones. Remainder of the afternoon was taken up with odd jobs. After tea we had a few patients one of which had to go to hospital. Wrote a long letter to Nessie L. & then played cards till 9.00 p.m. Received letter from Uncle Tom & papers from home & William. Quite chilly tonight but fair. Had some supper & turned in about 9.00 p.m.

### *Sunday 15th August*

When we got up the sky was very cloudy but managed to keep off until we were in the middle of sick parade & then it did not forget to come down. The doctor & I put on our rain coats & finished the parade. Our hut was nearly flooded out & all our things soaked. It simply poured till 12 noon with thunder & lightning as well but has cleared up beautifully now. Church parade should have been at noon but was put off till 3.00 p.m. We had a service first after which about 300 of us took communion. After tea we went for a fine walk out into the country & got back about 7.30 p.m. feeling very hungry so made some tea. Saw Aylmer who said he was not feeling quite fit. Rcd. letters from Mother & Ella.

### *Monday 16th August*

Sick parade had to be at 9.00 a.m. today owing to an inspection by General Pultney commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps. [Pulteney, 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps] We paraded for the inspection at 10.00 a.m. I was again being in charge of the stretcher bearers. I was honoured by the General speaking to me. We just got back to our barracks before very heavy rain came on with thunder & lightning & lasted about an hour. After dinner we started packing & were kept busy all afternoon. We had another heavy storm between 3 & 4.00 p.m. but fortunately had not got the cart loaded. We left camp at 7.00 p.m. & after having been lost for about 1 ½ hours arrived at our destination<sup>52</sup> about 10.30 p.m. Had a bite of supper & off to bed. Rcd letter from Uncle John from London.

### *Wednesday 18th August*

We had a long lie this morning & did not get breakfast till 10.00 a.m. We spent most of the forenoon making little improvements & trying to make ourselves as comfortable as possible. We had steak & chips for dinner about 2.30 p.m. Sgt A. paid us a visit & he & the doctor sat talking to us till 4.00 p.m. The remainder of the afternoon was taken up with reading & writing. Our guns have been firing a good deal today but getting no reply. Each shot shakes our house violently. We had tea & supper together about 8.00 p.m. of ham & eggs & we did the meal full justice. I recd. letters from Mum, Dad, Betty, William & Dr M. A lovely night but very dark.

### *Thursday 19th August*

Just as we were preparing for bed a 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Scot was brought in by our bearers wounded in the thigh. After we had dressed him we had to send for the ambulance & it did not come until about 1.00 a.m. The doctor & I not feeling inclined for bed sat talking till nearly 2.00 a.m. then turned in. This has been a very lazy day. The hardest work we have done is write letters & play cards. I wrote to Uncle Tom, Uncle James & William. We had porridge for breakfast & steak & chips for dinner. We had rather an amusing experience today. The Catholic minister came & asked if he might leave his horse. While he was away it bolted! We turned in early tonight about 9.00 p.m.

### *Friday 20th August*

After a good breakfast of porridge, tea, bread & jam we had to tidy the place up. S.M. Cameron<sup>53</sup> D. Coy. stayed here all night & today as he is feeling a bit out of sorts & had a temperature. At 11.00 a.m. I went round the trenches with the doctor & enjoyed

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<sup>52</sup> La Vesée

<sup>53</sup> Probably Company Sergeant Major Alexander Cameron

the walk thoroughly. When I got back dinner was ready & so was I. After dinner I went along to the Pioneers' billet & watched them making the framework of our new dugout. Had ham & eggs for tea then sat & read for about an hour. We had one or two sick men tonight but none of them serious. The guns have hardly been so busy today. Rcd. a parcel from Huddersfield in good condition. Waited till 10.30 p.m. for the doctor coming in before going to bed.

#### *Saturday 21st August*

Got up & made breakfast & while Trotter & the doctor were at the trenches had a general tidy up. Had dinner of steak & chips ready when they returned. Wrote a long letter to Mother acknowledging parcel. Aymer paid us a visit & came back for tea at 4.30 p.m. One man from the trenches for hospital tonight. Been very wet & disagreeable all day but it has cleared up now. I just got word that a man has been wounded in the firing line.<sup>54</sup> It was not very serious just enough to get him to England. Had several chaps down for various things. Mr Menzies<sup>55</sup> came in when up with the rations & stayed a few minutes. Sat & talked till 10.30 p.m. Rcd. papers from William.

#### *Sunday 22nd August*

I went to the trenches with the doctor & again enjoyed the walk. There were very few sick. We got back about 1.30 p.m. & found dinner ready to which I did full justice. In the afternoon we had one or two shells over & the vibration brought down some of the tiles off a barn attached to the farmhouse we are in but otherwise did no damage. Had a short walk along the road but nothing to see. Our guns have been firing all day. We have got S.M. Cameron back again as he is not feeling right yet. It has been a very nice day & the doctor cycled down to the Field Ambulance to see about some medicines. Rcd. letter from Dad. Magnificent sunset here tonight.

#### *August 23rd Monday*

Connolly got up & made breakfast & called us when it was ready. It was Trotter's turn to go with the doctor so I had a general clean up. Since we came here we have been using tins of chloride of lime for seats as there were no chairs but as these were required at the trenches we had to invent something else, Trotter & I set to & made three camp stools which we carry about with us. Another lovely day & the guns still going at us. About 5.00 p.m. shells began to come over & we thought we were in for a rough time, one landing about 20yds away but they did not continue long. Rcd. letter from Mother from H. One man wounded (slightly)<sup>56</sup> & one sick.

#### *August 24th Tuesday*

Slept in this morning till 9.00 a.m. After breakfast I went round the trenches with the doctor but got very little to do. Got back about 1.30 p.m. feeling very hungry. The afternoon passed quietly. Had a visit from three officers of the Field Ambulance, the minister & quartermaster. C.O. went on 11 days leave & Captain Ferguson acts as C.O. After tea at 6.00 p.m. the work began. Three stretcher cases & 2 walking from the 1st R.S. & 1 walking case of our own.<sup>57</sup> None very serious. One of the 1st R.S. was accidentally shot this morning but not seriously. The two companies in the trenches

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<sup>54</sup> Lance Corporal William McLeod

<sup>55</sup> Second Lieutenant Robert Menzies

<sup>56</sup> Private Lionel Forster

<sup>57</sup> Lance Corporal James Stewart

were relieved by the other two companies. This has been another lovely day but very close & warm. The guns have been firing away all day.

*August 25th Wednesday*

I had a very busy forenoon one way & another. Cleaning lamps etc. then I had a lovely hot bath which was very refreshing. Then started on the dressing box & got it stocked & also the pill box. Made dinner of steak & chips & after the lunch we washed the dishes. Trotter & I went into the garden & dug a bag full of fine potatoes to take up to the dugout. We also got some leeks. Spent the rest of the afternoon lying about & had tea about 7.00 p.m. I received letters from Dad & Mother & a parcel from William. Acknowledged the former. Guns on both sides have been going hard all day. Got all my clothes beautifully washed for 6d.

*August 26th Thursday*

The doctor being later than usual returning from the billets he had to go up to the trenches on a bicycle so I was left behind. I found plenty to do in the meantime. Up to dinner time the guns on both sides were very quiet but made up for it this afternoon. Some of the shells came quite close but fortunately did no harm. Wrote long letter to Aunt May. Received letter from Aunt Marie & watch holder from Joe Anderson. This has been another splendid day but warm. Had a clean shirt today, no sick for hospital & no wounded. Some of our friends from the company came down to see us after teatime & stayed a while. The doctor came back from dinner about 10.00 p.m. & we talked till 10.45 & then went off to bed.

*August 27th Friday*

The doctor was rather late in getting back from the billets so we did not start for the trenches till 12.00 p.m. very little doing up there & very quiet all round. After dinner lay about till teatime. Sent one man to hospital & kept one here. Wrote letter to Joe Anderson & Aunt Marie. Lovely day but very warm. Ambulance came about 8.30 p.m. & rations soon after. While the transport were unloading, a machine gun started & the bullets came over in hundreds. Fortunately nobody was hit but one man got kicked by his horse but was able to ride home. Sat talking with the doctor till about 11.00 p.m. then off to bed.

*August 28th Saturday*

We were wakened at 6.00 a.m. with the sad news that one of our sergeants had been killed & body was being brought down. When it arrived we found it was our own platoon sergeant.<sup>58</sup> After breakfast we had to make the body ready for burial. Washed & shaved then washed my shorts. Made a bread pudding & prepared the meat for dinner. The doctor being later than ever returning from the billets went to the trenches by himself. After dinner we lay down for a couple of hours. Had several of our friends in to see us. Burial party arrived at 6.00 p.m. Guns have been very quiet all day but started again about 5.30 p.m. but did not continue long. Rain came on about 7.00 p.m. Received parcels from Uncle Tom & the Langholm Soldiers' Comfort Committee.

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<sup>58</sup> Sergeant John Tod was sniping from No Man's Land when killed by an enemy sniper about 05.30

### *August 29th Sunday*

We had to go through the usual routine clearing up & washing dishes etc. till about 11.00 a.m. Trotter went with the doctor today & the boy & I were left to make the dinner. We made fried steak & boiled potatoes & then stewed apples & custard - the meal was a great success. After dinner & the dishes washed we spent the afternoon writing letters. I wrote to Mother, Uncle John, Uncle Tom & Mrs Hamilton. It was very wet & cold all forenoon & about 6.00 p.m. rain came on very heavily. After tea we sat & read till ration time then made a cup of coffee for supper. The doctor came up from headquarters about 10.00 p.m. & we sat & talked till 11.00 p.m.

### *August 30th Monday*

After the usual work was done I got ready to go with the doctor to the trenches. We had only three patients, two of which got castor oil. We got back about 2.00 p.m. I found a good dinner ready for me. We had a look at the dugout & it is progressing slow but sure. Dinner over I washed my shorts & a few other things. The guns were very quiet in the forenoon but made up for it this afternoon. The S.M paid us a visit but did not bring any news. Some of our friends down from the trenches for water called in to see us. Been cold & blowy all day but dry. Saw Aymer & he gave me a box of 50 fags. We turned in 8.30 p.m. feeling rather tired.

### *August 31st Tuesday*

It was Trotter's turn to go with the doctor so I was left to make the dinner. The Pioneer sergeant came in & told us the dugout was nearly finished so we arranged to move tomorrow. In the afternoon Trotter & Connolly went into Armentieres to get a lamp & a few other things for the dugout. The doctor & I sat talking till teatime. He had not gone more than 10 minutes when a shell burst over this house & the shrapnel came down like hail on the slates. They sent over 5 altogether but did no harm. The boys returned about 6.15 p.m. with lamp etc. Received letter from Mother. Two of our friends came over & spent the evening with us.

### *September 1st Wednesday*

I went to the trenches with the doctor & got back about 1.30 p.m. After dinner we started packing up. At 3.00 p.m. 12 men came to take our stuff up. The last lot got away about 5.30 p.m. The trench orderlies gave us tea which was very welcome. The doctor & Connolly went up with the first lot & Trotter & I followed after everything was away. Rain came on very heavy about 1.00 p.m. & made the roads & trenches very slippery. We got into kind of order before bedtime & are very comfortable. The Pioneers came up at dusk & put on the finishing touches. The Pioneers had just got off the roof when a machine gun started but did no harm. Received letters from Mother & William.

### *September 2nd Thursday*

We all had breakfast together this morning, then Trotter & Connolly went down for some things we had left, & the doctor went off to billets. I found plenty to do to take up my time while they were away. The Colonel (acting), Adjutant & S.M looked in on their way to the trenches. The doctor came back about 1.30 p.m. & we had dinner waiting. All afternoon we were busy making ourselves comfortable, the doctor doing his bit. After tea Trotter & Connolly went down to our last billet for a stove but had to come home without it owing to the slippery roads. The Doc. had to go down to

Hqrs. tonight so I was alone for a bit. Guns very busy especially up Ypres way. Been very wet this afternoon.

*September 3rd Friday*

We had to be up & breakfasted by 9.00 a.m. as they wanted to be at the billets by 10.00 a.m. Trotter & Connolly went down to the farm to get a stove but could not carry it all so had to go twice. While they were away I washed the dishes & put up some shelves. For dinner we had Maconochies [?] & custard. Came on very wet after dinner & the place was soon in a puddle. When it had faired we tried to draw the water away but it was not a great success. Wrote a long letter to Mother & received a nice parcel from Ella. After tea we closed up the doors & sat & talked or read. When it was dark I lit the fire which helped cheer us up. Trotter left about 7.00 p.m. to meet the transport at headquarters.

*September 4th Saturday*

I had to be up early to help with the breakfast this morning. We had porridge & ham & eggs. We were just in the middle when we got word a man had been wounded & was on his way down.<sup>59</sup> We were able to finish breakfast before he arrived. The ambulance came about 10.30 a.m. & got him away. After tidying up & having a wash I did one or two odd jobs for the doctor. Wrote a long letter to Mother.

*September 5th Sunday*

Received letter from Mother. Wrote long letter to Ella. We were busy all day making improvements & at night we had a party up to help us.

*September 6th Monday*

Lovely day but rather chilly at night. Had our usual visit from the Colonel, Adjutant & S.M. Received fine tuck box from Mother – 200 cigarettes from Mr Currie. Guns on both sides been rather busy all day. After tea the doctor & I had a busy time building the parapet in front of the dugout but it was fine exercise.

*September 7th Tuesday*

The Huns had their half hour's hate between 9.00 & 10.00 a.m. but don't think they did much damage. Another lovely day but not too warm. The Colonel etc. have just been in & suggested a few more improvements. Wrote short letter to Mother & P.C.s to Mr Currie & Lizzie Ray. Had another party up to help us & they did splendid work.

*September 8th Wednesday*

The Huns had their usual hate. After it was over Connolly & I filled about 30 sandbags with earth & I built them while he made dinner. Connolly & I went to headquarters to get water & some parcels. I got tobacco & cigarettes also papers from William & letter from Mother.

*September 9th Thursday*

One of our best snipers was wounded but fortunately it was not serious.<sup>60</sup> This has been an exceptionally quiet day in fact if it had not been for an occasional rifle shot.

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<sup>59</sup> Private George Valentine

<sup>60</sup> Corporal George Gibb

At night we had a working party up & they almost completed the work outside the dugout. Lovely weather.

*September 10th Friday*

Except for an occasional burst this has been a very quiet day. The boy & I have been busy all day filling sandbags to build a partition between the two rooms of our dugout. Wrote letters to Mother, Nessie & Willie Morton. A working party came up at night & continued filling sandbags.

*September 11th Saturday*

Another lovely day & very warm. We continued the work of previous day & have now decided to build another small dugout for feeding in. The Huns began to get very frisky about 7.00 p.m. & to help matters a bit 3 of our aeroplanes came over & although some of the shots were pretty close they did not get hit. Received P.C from Aunty Marie from Bowness & papers from William. Another working party up tonight.

*September 12th Sunday*

Our batteries had a bit of a show this morning but then it was merely range finders. The doctor did not go to billets till night so helped us to build the division in the dugout. It was very warm work & took us nearly 200 sandbags. We had a sergeant in the machine gun wounded in the morning & chap in B Coy, killed in the night.<sup>61</sup> Trotter returned from leave after having a very good time.<sup>62</sup> Received letter from Mother.

*September 13th Monday*

The guns were pretty busy this forenoon but quietened down about dinnertime. They had a flare up about 5.00 p.m. lasting about an hour. The C.O., Adjutant & S.M. came up about 7.00 p.m. to see if it had affected us. We have hardly done anything today it was so warm. After tea I had a fine hot bath & change. Rcd. letter from Aunt Maggie, Ella & Nessie & parcels from the 2 former.

*September 14th Tuesday*

This has been a very quiet day. Wrote letters to Mother, Ella & Aunt Maggie & Tom Perry. Had Aymer down for tea & gave him partridge provided by the doctor.

*September 15th Wednesday*

We got orders to pack ready to move so we had a busy day. The doctor arranged for the cart to be at Headquarters at 2.30 p.m. but the man took his horse away so we had to wait until he came back at 6.30 p.m. Connolly & I went with the cart back to Erquinghem (le Sec) (about 7 miles) & arrived there about 8.30 p.m. Rcd. parcel from Uncle Robert.

*September 16th Thursday*

We rested all day. The doctor & I went over all our stuff & threw out what we did not want. We had a sick parade but not much doing. Rcd. letter from Mother.

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<sup>61</sup> Private Alexander Farquharson

<sup>62</sup> Trotter was married in Edinburgh 6 September

*September 17th Friday*

Reveille 3.00 a.m., breakfast at 3.45 a.m. Left camp at 5.00 a.m. & marched 9 miles with full equipment. Arrived at new camp at 9.00 a.m.<sup>63</sup> These are the worst billets we have been in but will no be here long. Rested all day & had a walk into the village at night but not much to see.

*September 18th Saturday*

We are not moving today so will get a good rest. We had sick parade at 7.30 a.m. as the battalion was to be inspected at 9.00 a.m.<sup>64</sup> We did not need to turn out. Wrote letter to Mother & Lizzie Rae. Lovely day & very warm.

*September 19th Sunday*

Nothing much doing till after dinner when we had to pack up to move. We left with the transports at 11.00 p.m. & the battalion followed 4 hours later. A lovely night & nice and cool.

*September 20th Monday*

We arrived at the railhead about 4.00 a.m. & started trucking the wagons & horses immediately. The battalion came in at 5.30 a.m. & we started at 6.00 a.m. We had a truck to ourselves & put down stretchers & were soon asleep. The journey lasted till 4.00 p.m. in the afternoon but we did not weary. After the train journey we had to march about 4 miles to a small village where we got billets at 7.30 p.m.<sup>65</sup>

*September 21st Tuesday*

Had rather a big sick parade today but mostly blistered feet after the marching. Wrote a letter to Mother. We spent the evening listening to the gramophone.

*September 22nd Wednesday*

We were kept pretty busy all forenoon with sick men but got over it before dinner. About 3.00 p.m. we got orders to get ready to move & had just got packed up & the cart loaded when these orders were cancelled & we had to undo everything again. Wrote a long letter to Mother & received one.

*September 23rd Thursday*

Had pretty large sick parade which kept us busy most of the morning. After dinner I re-arranged the medicine table & had a general clean up. Very warm & sultry. Wrote a letter to Ellen. About 6.30 p.m. thunder & lightning & heavy rain came on & continued all night.

*September 24th Friday*

We had a little rain this morning but the air is much clearer. Sick parade at 7.30 a.m. owing to a route march. In orders tonight I was gazetted L/Sgt. Rcd. P.C from Uncle Tom from London.

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<sup>63</sup> Vieux Berquin

<sup>64</sup> Inspection by Lieutenant General Pulteney, commanding III Corps

<sup>65</sup> Train from Hazebrouk to Guillaucourt, marched to Lamotte en Santerre



*September 25th Saturday*

Very wet & miserable today & the gramophone is broken so there is absolutely nothing to do. Wrote letter to Mother & received one also papers from William. It has been a continual pour all day & still continues.

*September 26th Sunday*

This has been a very long day. Absolutely nothing to do. It has been fair all day & the sun tried to get out a few times. I have got a bad head cold & my head aches a bit. Wrote letters to Aunt Marie, Nessie & Willie Morton. Rcd new pattern respirator & Balmoral.

*September 27th Monday*

This has been a miserable day & after sick parade was nothing to do. Our movements are very uncertain & we live on rumours. After tea we played cards till bedtime. The company were getting paid so I drew 30 francs. Received parcel from home containing shirt, Glengarry, jacket, socks, fags & tobacco.

*September 28th Tuesday*

Very wet & miserable here today & cold & very little doing. Spent the afternoon writing letters & wrote to Mother, Ella, Aunt Maggie & Uncle Tom. Received parcel from Ella. After tea played cards till bedtime. About 7.00 p.m. rain came on again very heavy & continued nearly all night.

*September 29th Wednesday*

This has been another awful day. Heavy rain & very cold. After sick parade I had a hot bath & a change of clothing. I had a few little jobs to do which helped to fill in the time. After tea we played cards till 7.30 p.m. & then read till bedtime. Received letters from Ella & Mother.

*September 30th Thursday*

This has been a fine day but bitterly cold. We had a visit from Dr Dixon this afternoon. He is with the Royal Irish now. Went early to bed but could not sleep for the cold.

*October 1st Friday*

Another splendid day but very cold. Dr. rode over to see L & B Horse & saw T. Elliot. Doctor gave a lecture to the stretcher bearers & I acted as model. Wrote letter to Mother & returned photos. The divisional band came into the village & entertained us for about an hour. After tea played cards till bedtime.

*October 2nd Saturday*

Lovely day & much milder. The C.O., Adjutant, doctor & Company Commander rode over to see the trenches about 7 miles away & did not get back till 4.30 p.m. Sick parade 5.30 p.m., after which I went with the doctor to see two men who were unable to attend parade. Received letters from Mother, Nessie & papers from William.

*October 3rd Sunday*

Another lovely day altho' we had two slight showers of rain. Wrote letter to Mother. After dinner we started to pack up and were kept busy till tea-time. Turned in very early 7.30 p.m.

*October 4th Monday*

La Motte [Lamotte en Santerre]

Reveille 4.00 a.m., breakfast 5.00 a.m. moved off at 7.00 a.m. Sick parade at 6.00 p.m. We marched about 11? miles & arrived at our destination at 12.30 p.m.<sup>66</sup> On the way we passed the 10th Battalion Black Watch & I had a word with Willie Wilson. This is an awful place & simply swarming with rats. Received a parcel of tobacco from Cornet J. Wilson.<sup>67</sup>

*October 5th Tuesday*

Got up at 8.00 a.m. & found it raining pretty hard. It continued to rain nearly constantly all day. We have had a very busy day clearing out a large cellar for our dressing station & only got it finished at 6 p.m. It has been a very quiet day but it got noisier about 6.20 p.m. This is an awful place - rats & mice in hundreds - it has been a lovely spot. While clearing the cellar we found half a bag of coke & are now sitting reading round a nice fire.

*October 6th Wednesday*

After sick parade at 9.00 a.m. I went with the doctor to see the other half of the battalion in billets a distance of about 10 [2?] miles. When I got back & had dinner we shifted our digs into a cellar & have made ourselves very comfortable. This has been a lovely day & quite mild. Received letters from Mother & Dad. We had 6 men in suffering from the chalk fumes but were able to continue duty

*October 7th Thursday*

I went down to the billets again with the doctor & the roads being much drier the walk was much more enjoyable. Trotter had a good dinner ready when I got back & I did it full justice. While Trotter was away with 2 men to hospital, I sat & wrote letters & a shell exploded just outside but did no more damage than scatter fragments of earth & stones over the roof. After tea I messed about making one or two improvements, then sat and read until bedtime. Wrote to Mother & Uncle Robert. Received parcel from home & a letter from Aunt Maggie.

*October 8th Friday*

I let Trotter go with the Doctor today & I stayed at home & did the housework & had a hot bath & a change. One or two shells landed very close but did not do much damage. Wrote a long letter to Auntie Maggie & then had my hair cut. In the evening I did a little joinering then wrote to Nessie.

*October 9th Saturday*

Again I stayed behind while Trotter went with the doctor but found plenty to do to pass the time. After dinner we had a sick parade of 14 men from the Wessex Engineers<sup>68</sup> & some of their complaints were very amusing. Received papers &

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<sup>66</sup> Half battalions at Fontaine Les Cappy and Chuignes

<sup>67</sup> John Wilson, the Cornet of the 1914 'Common Riding' in Langholm

<sup>68</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Wessex Field Company, Royal Engineers

cigarettes from Nurse Trotter<sup>69</sup> which I acknowledged by return. I also got letters from Uncle Tom & papers from Wm. Wrote to Granny then had tea. Lovely weather but very cold at nights.

#### *October 10th Sunday*

I went with the doctor today & after the sick parade was over I had a lovely hot bath. I got back about 1.00 p.m. in nice time for dinner. In the afternoon except for one or two patients with bad feet we had very little to do. Received a letter from Dad & acknowledged same to London. In orders tonight we received the good news that leave had started again. Played cards till 10.00 p.m. then turned in.

#### *October 11th Monday*

We had a fairly big sick parade today but soon got through it. The doctor has been away all day & only got back at teatime. I had plenty to do to take up my time. A & D Coy. relieved C & D. Received parcel from Uncle T., H & C Wilson, Gala & Langholm Soldiers Committee & letter from Joe Anderson. Wrote letter to Mother & P.C. to Uncle Tom. We had rain this afternoon but it has passed off again. Aymer was in for a few minutes.

#### *October 14th Thursday*

Went down to the billets with the doctor & after sick parade I had a fine bath. After dinner the doctor & Trotter went up to the trenches & I filled in the time reading & writing. Two of my friends came in for a chat. After tea the doctor & I were busy for about an hour. Captain Green<sup>70</sup> brought a party of bearers to show them our place. Aymer came in about 7.00 p.m. with the sad news that T. Perry<sup>71</sup> had been killed at La Basse between 25/29 Sept. Wrote to Ella.

#### *October 15th Friday*

This has been a long forenoon & Trotter being away I was very dull. Cannot get poor Tom out of my head. We had one case for hospital, a chap with acute appendicitis. Received a letter from Mother & papers from William. Wrote to Nessie. Had a visit from the padre. After tea we sat & read till 7.00 p.m. & then had a game of cards.

#### *October 16th Saturday*

Went with the doctor to billets. Not a very big parade. Called at the post office & got our letters. I got papers from Nurse Trotter. Trotter had dinner waiting when I got back. In the afternoon there was very little doing so went & visited my friends in B. Coy. Had a visitor for tea. Wrote to Mrs Marks & Joe Anderson. Played cards till bedtime.

#### *October 17th Sunday*

I had to be up by & 7.00 a.m. as I had to meet the doctor at headquarters at 7.45 a.m. & be at billets at 8.00 a.m. to see the sick & also to see that those going to the trenches had greased their feet properly. We got back about 9.30 a.m. & found the other sick parade waiting so it was 11.00 o'clock before I got my breakfast. After

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<sup>69</sup> Nurse Trotter was Alfred Trotter's sister, Lillian Maud Trotter, born Rawalpindi. She was a British Red Cross nurse serving on the Western Front. In June 1915 she transferred to No.2 BRCS Hospital at Rouen, and at some point to No.8 BRCS Hospital at Le Touquet

<sup>70</sup> Captain George Green

<sup>71</sup> Tom Perry, commissioned into 1<sup>st</sup> Cameron Highlanders, killed 25 September 1915

dinner we had a few patients but soon got through them. Received a letter from Dad from London. Wrote to Mother. Turned in about 7.00 p.m.

*October 18th Monday*

Again I had to be ready for the doctor at 7.45 a.m. & go to the billets. We had a very small parade there & got back in time to have breakfast before the next parade. After the second parade we had a general clear up & now we look nice & tidy. After dinner I had to go & see the machine gun section grease their feet, while Trotter went to the trenches with more grease for the men there. Wrote to Mother & received papers from Nurse Trotter. After tea we played cards till bedtime. Changed shirt & socks & put on undervest.

*October 19th Tuesday*

Sick parade was at the usual time today (9.30 a.m.) & after we got finished Trotter went with the doctor to billets, I being left to do the house work. After dinner of chops & chips we were preparing for a quiet afternoon when the doctor came in & said one of us would have to go up to the trench & see the feet greased. It fell to my lot & I started at 4.00 p.m. & it was a long walk but I enjoyed it. I had tea in the trench with the C.S.M. & got back about 6.15 p.m. Played cards till bedtime. Killed 20 rats just outside our little home.

*October 20th Wednesday*

My turn to go with the doctor & after the parade was over I had a lovely hot bath. I got back about 1.00 p.m. & Trotter had a fine dinner waiting. In the afternoon I had to go to the trenches leaving at 2.00 p.m. & returned in time for tea at 5.00 p.m. In orders tonight we were told that all leave was stopped & there is a rumour going that we are to be on the move again. No letter from home today. Played cards from 7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.

*October 21st Thursday*

I again went with the doctor & we had a very busy forenoon. After sick parade we had to examine the draft (106 men), about a dozen were returning after being wounded. They were a fine body of men. In the afternoon we waited for the post & this time was not disappointed. I got letters from Mother, Aunt Maggie, Uncle Tom & Lizzie Rae. Wrote to Mother & Mr Currie. After tea we had a visit from some of our friends including one who had come back with the draft. Played cards till bedtime. Heavy rain came on about 7.30 p.m. & still continues.

*October 22nd Friday*

The rain has gone & it is a lovely morning. Trotter's turn to go with the doctor, so I was left to clean up. I had dinner ready for him when he got back. I had to go to the trenches in the afternoon to see that the men greased their feet. It was very bad walking after the rain & I was a bonny mess when I got back. I received a letter from Nessie & wrote to Ella. Turned in about 7.30 p.m.

*October 23rd Saturday*

Another lovely day & very mild. Went to billets but had not a very large parade. The French have been making arrangements for taking over the trenches & billets. After dinner I paid my daily visit to the trenches & had tea there with the Coy. S.M. Got back about 5.30 p.m. & found letter from Mrs Loudon & papers from William. We

had 4 men of the new draft round to see the doctor at 6.00 p.m. These men attended to we settled down to a quiet game of cards.

*October 24th Sunday*

While Trotter & the doctor were down at the billets, I had my hands full getting packed up ready to move. I left with the cart at 2.00 p.m. & Trotter followed with the last company. Rain came on pretty heavy just as we were starting & continued all the way. We had to march 12 miles back to La Motte but I managed to stick it alright & did not get very wet thanks to my [?] Dixter. After we had had something to eat we just fell into bed. Received letter from Mother & a box of toffee from Mrs Loudon.

*October 25th Monday*

Still wet & very cold. Sick parade was at 10.30 a.m. & it kept us going till 1.00 p.m. This was caused by the bad roads yesterday. Received fine parcel from Ella & wrote letters to Mother & Mrs Loudon. We had more sick at 6.00 p.m. but only a few. Tea at 6.45 p.m., after which we had to pack the cart ready for an early start tomorrow, then off to bed.

*October 26th Tuesday*

Reveille 5.00 a.m., breakfast 6.30 a.m. Fell in 7.30 a.m. Move off 8.00 a.m. We marched about 11 miles & although bitterly cold when we started we soon got warmed up. We arrived here at 12.30 p.m. & had dinner immediately. Sick parade at 2.30 p.m. kept us going till 6.00 p.m. Then tea after which we had to pack the cart before turning in. We are in bell tents tonight.<sup>72</sup>

*October 27th Wednesday*

Boves [South of Amiens]

Reveille 5.00 a.m., breakfast 5.45 a.m., sick parade at 6.00 a.m. Fall in 7.00 a.m. It was drizzling when we left & continued of & on all the way. We halted for an hour half-way & had dinner & arrived at our new destination at 3.30 p.m. We covered fully 17 miles. Our new billets are not up to much but we will soon improve them. The whole division is in this district. It is very quiet here & we cannot hear the guns. Received letter from Ella.

*October 28th Thursday*

Bougainville

We slept sound right on till 8.00 a.m. & after a good breakfast felt as fit as ever. Sick parade commenced at 10.00am & lasted till 1.00 p.m. After dinner I was just starting to write when the doctor came in & said he had got a new billet for me. So I went with him to see where it was & then came back & started packing up. It did not take long to shift & now we are very comfortable & the people are most kind. Trotter<sup>73</sup> & I sleep together in a bed. It has been very wet all day & is also very cold tonight. Wrote letter to Ella & received papers from William.

*November 1st Monday*

Sick parade at 8.30 a.m. then I had other things to do which kept me busy till dinner time. Another sick parade at 3.00 p.m. After which I had one man to take to hospital.

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<sup>72</sup> 26 October Boves, 27 October Bougainville

<sup>73</sup> Trotter was married in Edinburgh on 6 September, and commissioned in the Royal Scots 30 October 1915. Last mentioned 28 October, and then by correspondence on 5 November.

Walked round by post office & got letter from William. Tuck box received this morning & had a little tea party & everything was very much appreciated. Very wet & cold, raw wind all day. Wrote letter to Mother.

*November 2nd Tuesday*

Sick parade at 8.30 a.m. & so we did not get breakfast till 10.00 a.m. The Doctor has been away all day at Amiens. I had another parade at 3.00 p.m. In the forenoon I had a walk but did not stay out long as it was raining heavily. I expected the S.M for tea but he did not turn up. About 5.00 p.m. the owner of the house brought in a fine log & now we have a lovely fire. Wrote to Aunt Marie acknowledging cigarettes received today.

*November 3rd Wednesday*

We had the usual routine to go through this morning, after which I had a fine hot bath & a change. Then I had a walk round calling at the orderly room with the sick report. Not much to do after sick parade in the afternoon. Had a friend in for tea & other two came & spent the evening. We played cards till 9.00 p.m. when they had to go. Received letters from Mother & Dad. Lovely day & quite mild.

*November 4th Thursday*

We slept in this morning but after an awful rush I managed to be ready when the doctor came in. Very little doing but a lovely day. After sick parade at 3.00 p.m. I went for a walk & on my return had my hair cut. Received a long letter from Aunt Alison & wrote to Mother. After tea we played cards for about an hour & a half & then turned in early.

*November 5th Friday*

Sick parade same as usual after which I had to go to the hospital for some medicines etc. After dinner & the second parade I intended to go to the football match between the 9th & Argylls but it came on very wet. Received a lovely parcel from Ella & acknowledged same. Wrote a note to Trotter. Had a couple of friends in for tea & just finished when two wounded men, the result of football match, came in but not serious. Played cards till 10.00 p.m. Got new assistant.<sup>74</sup>

*November 6th Saturday*

I got word last night that I could have a pass into A.... [Amiens?] today & jumped at the idea. There were six of us & we left at 8.00 a.m. We had not time for breakfast before leaving so had a good meal in a first-class restaurant when we arrived. Then we had a look round & visited the cathedral. After which we had a lovely hot bath. About 2.00 p.m. we returned to the same place for dinner & it was a great success. Spent the afternoon sightseeing & buying souvenirs. It is a lovely place & we enjoyed the trip very much. We got back at 7.30 p.m. nearly penniless. Received parcel from Mother, papers from William & parcel from R. Hamilton Esq.

*November 7th Sunday*

Sick parade was not till 10.00 a.m. so I had a fine long lie. We got finished about 12.00 p.m. except for a few that had to come back at 3.00 p.m. Wrote a long letter to

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<sup>74</sup> New assistant could be M(a)cGregor mentioned 8 and 29 November; or Clark 21 November

Mother & then had tea. In the evening we had a few friends in and played cards till 10.00 p.m. Lovely weather though a bit cold.

*November 8th Monday*

We had a very large sick parade & we were all in a bad temper before it was finished as we had not had breakfast. After the afternoon parade McGregor & I went for a walk & returned in time for tea. At 7.00 p.m. I went to a supper given by S.M Gibson & S.M Cameron<sup>75</sup> before leaving the battalion to take up commissions. No mail for me & I was very disappointed. Drew 50 francs.

*November 9th Tuesday*

We got up at 7.00 a.m. & had breakfast before parade today & it was fortunate we did as we did not get finished till 10.30 a.m. I then went round to the Field Ambulance to get some things we required. The afternoon parade was a very small one, so soon got through it. Received a letter from Uncle James & magazines from Nurse Trotter. It has been very dull today & about 5.00 p.m. a strong wind got up & rain came on.

*November 10th Wednesday*

We were to be inspected by the General<sup>76</sup> at 10.30 a.m. but it had to be put off till 11.45 a.m. & finally came off at 1.00 p.m. He told us he was sorry to lose us but altho' he had asked for us to be allowed to accompany the division, he had been refused. Letter from Mother & Dad also magazine received. Very wet all day.

*November 11th Thursday*

Up to dinner time the routine was just the usual. In the afternoon I had a walk round the village & bought a couple of nice rings. After tea I had to go with the doctor to one of the billets to see a patient. Terrible night with wind & rain. Played cards till 9.30 p.m., then turned in. No mail for me today.

*November 12th Friday*

Very wet here all day but very thankful we have a good billet. [?] except read & write. I did a bit of joinering & made a box to carry our foodstuff in. Received a fine parcel from Mother & Aunt Maggie & acknowledged same, also letter from Uncle Lawson & Nurse Trotter.

*November 13th Saturday*

Another awful day so we just stayed indoors. I had a very bad attack of toothache in the afternoon but it settled down before bedtime. I received 3 parcels of magazines from Nurse Trotter. Very little to do so amused ourselves playing cards.

*November 14th Sunday*

Sick parade 10.00 a.m. so had a fine long lie. After it was over I had to visit some sick men with the doctor. After dinner we spent the afternoon writing letters. I wrote to Mother, Nessie & Nurse Trotter & Trotter, also sent rings to Nurse Trotter & Nessie. After tea we were just settling down for a quiet evening when a man from the transport was brought in with a badly cut hand which required 2 stitches. Rcd. parcel from Trotter.

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<sup>75</sup> Sergeant Majors Alexander Cameron and Robert Gibson

<sup>76</sup> Brigadier General Croker, 27<sup>th</sup> Division proceeded to Salonika

*November 15th Monday*

I had to go to the dentist today so went by ambulance from hospital. I went with another fellow to a private dentist. We have to go back again on Friday. After we had gone to the dentist we were free till train time & wandered all over the town, but got very tired long before it was time to leave. Got back at 8.00 p.m. & after a hot drink fell into bed. Received letter from Mother.

*November 16th Tuesday*

When we got up this morning we found the ground was covered with snow. It was a very pretty sight but when the sun came out & melted the snow it made the ground very sloppy. We had a general clean up today & polished all the instruments. After dinner we had very little to do especially after sick parade. Just after tea a fire broke out in a house standing by itself on the outskirts of town & caused great excitement among the inhabitants. No letters for me today.

*November 17th Wednesday*

I had to go to the dentist again but he did not keep me long & gave me no pain at all. The R.S.M. was at the army dentist & when we were both finished, we spent the remainder of the day together sight seeing & shopping. We both returned broke but had a good time. Received letters from Mother & Father.

*November 18th Thursday*

Routine same as usual up till 4.00 p.m., after which I wrote home & sent brooch to Mother. Lovely weather but roads very muddy. Received parcel & letter from Bessie Brown. In the evening we had two friends in & played cards till bedtime. I had a lovely hot bath which was very refreshing.

*November 19th Friday*

Very cold all day & it threatened to snow in the afternoon. We had a very large sick parade & it was 11.00 a.m. before we finished. I wrote letters to Uncle Lawson, Mother & P.C to Uncle Tom. After tea we got the gramophone & a fine lot of new records & sat listening to it till bedtime.

*November 20th Saturday*

Very little doing after sick parade, so went for a walk round the village. The afternoon parade only lasted half an hour & then had to go to the hospital for some things. After tea I took the gramophone down to B Coy & entertained them for a couple of hours. Received 100 Gold Flake from Nurse Trotter & papers from William.

*November 21st Sunday*

Sick parade as usual after which I had to go to the hospital for indent. After dinner & sick parade I went for a walk with Clark & called for mail. Received parcel from Uncle T. & letter from Mother. Wrote letter to Mother & Ella & P.Cs to Uncle T & Nurse Trotter. After tea we played cards from 8.00 p.m. till bedtime. Lovely day but very cold.



*November 22nd Monday*

Sick parade as usual. In the forenoon we messed about till dinner time. After the 2nd parade Clark & I went for a fine walk & I enjoyed it thoroughly. Rcd. a lovely parcel from Ella & acknowledged same. After tea I took the gramophone down to B Coy sergeants' mess & entertained them.

*November 23rd Tuesday*

Very little to do after sick parade but managed to fill in the time in various ways. In the afternoon I had a short walk. Wrote a p.c to mother. In the evening we had the gramophone going till bedtime.

*November 24th Wednesday*

Ferrieres

We got orders to move at 2.00 p.m. so we had a very busy forenoon getting things packed up. It was only a 6 mile march & we arrived at our destination at 4.00 p.m. We had some time to wait before we got a billet & then had to go in beside troops who were leaving at midnight & did not get to bed until they had gone. We had a sick parade at 6.00 p.m. which lasted about an hour. Received books from Nurse Trotter & letters from home.

*November 25th Thursday*

Pont Noyelles

Reveille at 5.30 a.m. & we had to be ready to move at 8.00 a.m. Left at 9.00 a.m. accompanied by divisional band as far as Amiens. We march 13 miles & arrive at Pont Noyelles at 2.30 p.m. We did full justice to a meal & then started to prepare for a sick parade at 5.00 p.m. which kept me going till 7.30 p.m. A cup of tea & a biscuit & off to bed dead tired.

*November 26th Friday*

Sailly Lorette

Reveille 5.30 a.m. & we had just managed to get breakfast when we had about a dozen patients. We left at 9.00 a.m. & marched about 4 miles [?] arriving at 1.00 p.m. We were ready for a good dinner. We had sick parade but it was not a big one so did not take long. After tea at 6.00 p.m. we had the gramophone going for about an hour then off to bed.

*November 27th Saturday*

Suzanne

Reveille 6.00 a.m. breakfast 7.00 a.m. start off 9.15 a.m. It was a very keen frost when we started & the horses had difficulty keeping their feet. We came about 10 miles arriving at 1.00 p.m. The billets are awful but expect to move again tomorrow. We had a very big mail 68 bags. I received fags from Uncle Tom, cake from Nellie Tweedie, letters from Nessie, Aunt Maggie, Uncle Tom, Uncle Andrew & Willie Morton.

*November 28th Sunday*

We were nearly frozen & did not get much sleep. Sick parade at 10.00 a.m. & occupied us for 1 ½ hours after which we tried to make ourselves a bit more comfortable. In the afternoon we got some coal & made a big fire & sat round it

reading & writing. I wrote a long letter to Mother & a P.C to Uncle Tom. Received a letter from Mother.

*November 29th Monday*

Very wet here today & the roads very slippy. We were much more comfortable & slept well. MacGregor & the Doctor went on to our new billet at 7.00 a.m. & I followed with the cart after dark. After dinner we had to start getting things together ready to move at 4.30 p.m. The rain simply poured & altho' it was only a short distance to our new quarters our feet & legs were soaking. MacGregor had tea ready when we arrived. We shall be very comfortable once we get things in order. Rcd. parcel from home & fags from William.

*November 30th Tuesday*

Vaux

Up till 11.00 a.m. we were very busy getting things into order & now we are very comfortable. Sick parade was at 11.00 a.m. but a very small one. After dinner I wrote P.Cs to Mother, Aunt Maggie, Ella & W. Morton. Then lay down for an hour. At 3.30 p.m. we had another sick parade for C. Coy who did not turn up in the morning. After tea we sat round the fire till about 8.00 p.m. when I turned in.

*December 1st Wednesday*

I spent the whole day in bed with slight attack of pleurisy.

*December 2nd Thursday*

Still in bed though much better. Rcd letters from Dad with enclosure, Ella, Uncle Pat, Mr A. Scott.

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