

*Diary of all I
did, and places where I
was in action, during the
Great European War
of the years 1914-15-16-17-18
and 1919.*

*Signed
Thomas Fredrick Littler*

TF Littler's First World War Diaries

November 12th 1914

I enlisted in the 2nd 5th Battalion Earl of Chester's Cheshire Regiment (Territorial Force) as a Private.

December 3rd 1914

I was drafted to Aberystwyth in Wales; where we were billeted with the civilians, and underwent strict training for ten weeks.

February 16th 1915

Left Aberystwyth and went by train journey to Cambridge, here we had army rations, but billeted with the civilians, and had strict training here for nine weeks.

April 25th 1915

Left Cambridge and went by train to Northampton, here we fired a recruits course, and afterwards a trained men's course on the rifle range, and still billeted with the civilians, also all men who had signed "Foreign Service" were separated from the men who were "Home Service", and I being of the age of seventeen and a half, refused to sign "Foreign Service".

June 10th 1915

We left Cambridge and went to Norwich (Norfolk) for Coastal Duties, the journey was done by train, also we were billeted with the civilians.

July 12th 1915

I was picked out to go to work at "Siddley Deasy" Motor Car Works in Coventry (Warwickshire) at my trade, as a turner on munition work.

November 17th 1915

I returned to Norwich and reported myself at Headquarters and I was immediately drafted to the strength of my unit at a place called "Wroxham" about 7 2 miles nearer the coast, where we were rapidly preparing the "Defence Lines of England".

December 10th 1915

We marched from Wroxham back to Norwich a distance of 7 2 miles, and about this time the Germans made a big Zeppelin Raid over Norwich.

December 15th 1915

I was drafted from Norwich back to Cambridge along with 100 men for "Fatigue Duties" at a large "Army Ordinance Stores".

January 2nd 1916

I was taken ill with "Horse Exema" [eczema] on the arms and went into the 1st Eastern General Hospital in Cambridge for treatment.

January 11th 1916

I left hospital and went home on ten days sick leave.

January 21st 1916

I went back to Cambridge and signed "Foreign Service" same day.

January 26th 1916

I left Cambridge and went back and reported myself at Headquarters in Norwich.

January 27th 1916

I passed the Doctor and was marked A1 category, fit to go abroad.

January 31st 1916

I left Norwich and went to Oswestry in Shropshire and was posted to the strength of the 3rd Battalion Earl of Chester Cheshire Regiment, whilst here I underwent strict training ready for going abroad.

February 27th 1916

I was placed on draft and had four days draft leave.

March 15th 1916

The draft was ordered to prepare for abroad, and we all drew our "Active Service" kit.

March 18th 1916

Signed my articles, received my Pay Book and made my Will. Ie. In the event of my death I leave the whole of my property and effects, to be disposed of by my mother as she thinks best, Sarah Ellen Littler, 41 Flower Street, Castle, Northwich, Cheshire, Signed Thomas F Littler, 2795, Cheshire Regiment.

March 21st 1916

I left Wittingham Camp, Oswestry, and went with the draft by train to Southampton.

March 25th 1916

We sailed from Southampton on the "Copenhagen", the crossing was rough, and

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it was a Sunday night.

March 26th 1916

Disembarked at Rouen Docks at 7 a.m. and marched to the Territorial Infantry base. Here I saw the first regiment of French Cavalry.

April 1st 1916

*Having finished five days very strict training at the Base, on what was known as *AThe Bull Ring*, our draft was passed out and marked efficient to be sent up the line to the firing line.*

April 6th 1916

We were issued with 120 rounds of ammunition (per man), fur coats, mackintosh capes, and ground sheets, also passed by the Dr as fit.

April 7th 1916

We marched away from the camp, and entrained in cattle trucks, and left Rouen at 4p.m. and slept the night in the trucks, we were packed very tight and the only food was biscuits and bully beef.

April 8th 1916

We detrained at 8a.m. and had the opportunity to walk about a little, as we were all cramped, and the French trains travel very slowly and very roughly, we then travelled to a place called Doullens and arrived here at 9-30a.m. had our breakfast on bully beef and biscuits, and left the broad gauge railway altogether, and got a longed for wash, in a rest camp, made the acquaintances of some Indians and stayed in this rest camp 4 hours, and then we boarded a light railway, and travelled 14 kilometres on this and left it at a village called Pas [-en-Artois] and marched to the Battalion Headquarters at Grand Rullecourt (on the Arras front), here we had a barn to sleep in with one blanket and there being many large holes in barn made it very cold.

April 9th 1916

I went on church parade along with an old chum who I had met the night before when joining the Battalion, George Booth, all the night previous I had been kept awake with the role [roll] of the guns on the front.

April 10th 1916

Our draft was split up and men posted to different companies, I along with eight more was posted to No9 Platoon, (c) Company, my officers were 2nd Leiu Larne over the Platoon, and Capt Hartley over the company, the officer in charge of the

April 11th 1916

I started my parades with the Battalion the 1/5 Cheshire Regiment, and as the Battalion was a Pioneer Battalion our work was repairing all roads which led to the line and were cut up with constant transport. I also learnt that this village had been occupied by the Germans, during their advance in 1914, as the main road to Arras passed through it.

April 12th 1916

We did same work as on the day previous, and it rained heavily all day, at night I mounted billet guard and remained so all night.

April 13th 1916

I did nothing having been on guard all the previous night, but the company had orders to move at 12 noon and I had to move with them, to a village about 6 kilos away called Sars-le-bois, here we could hear the guns much plainer also at times hear the machine guns, there were civilians still here.

April 14th 1916

Our billets were barns, and found them infested with rats, we even had them walking over us when asleep.

April 15th 1916

We did our parades as usual, but had no food this day, as it ran 9 men to one loaf, the firing was heavy on the front all day and night.

April 20th 1916

I was mounted on guard all [day] and night, coming off on the morning of the 21st.

April 21st 1916

It was Good Friday and many wounded passed this day, also many horses cut about and bleeding, the sight was enough to make one's blood run cold.

April 22nd 1916

Was a good day here we heard of Russian Troops landing on French soil, also we had orders to hold ourselves in readiness to proceed up the line.

¹Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George

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April 23rd 1916

We left Sars-le-bois and marched back to Grand-Rullecourt a distance of 62 kilos, and it was Easter Sunday, and very hot, and today was the first time I had seen a British observation balloon, which was at a great height, observing over the German lines.

April 27th 1916

I was on guard, and a big bombardment at Arras was in progress, and the concussion of guns brought several old barns and sheds in the district to the ground.

April 28th 1916

A brigade of 6" howitzers passed through the village from the Arras front, all of them were badly damaged.

April 30th 1916

A German Airoplane passed over here followed by three British and a battle royal took place in the air, the German escaped. Many of the King Edward Horse (cavalry) who were in a field were wounded by bullets and shrapnel.

May 6th 1916

The battalion marched away from Grand-Rullecourt, joined the 56th Division, marching towards the line on the Somme, we passed through Sombrin, Bavincourt, Saulty, Gaudiempres, Humbercamps, St Amand, and arrived at Souastre 9-45 after a tedious march of 18 kilos, on the way we passed old disused trenches, also the roads and countryside showed wear and tear of the 1914 offensive.

May 7th 1916

I had a look round the village which had cement telegraph poles, which had been erected by the Germans previous to the war, many young girls here are mothers through the Huns, I had a look at some battered trenches in front of the village, also barbed wire entanglements and old dugouts, also a noticeable fact was that the Germans had used bottle necks in tree trunks for improvised telegraphy.

May 8th 1916

We had a days rest much to our surprise.

May 9th 1916

Our company marched 15 kilos to a place called Halloy and joined the 169

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Infantry Brigade, which consisted of the London Scottish, London Rifle Brigade,
and Queens Westminster Rifles.

May 10th & 11th 1916

Easy days resting .

May 13th 1916

Had a short route march a[nd] passed through a village called "Pommier"
[possibly should be Pommera].

May 14th 1916

The 1st 2nd 3rd & 4th Battalions of the >City of London= regiment were posted to
the strength of our Division, this day we had to give in our macintosh capes and
blankets and at night our beds were our overcoats.

May 15th 1916

I was on guard all day and night, between 9 and 10p.m a severe bombardment
opened out on the front, the shelling was terrific.

May 16th 1916

The bombardment begun again between 2 and 3 a.m. it was very severe while it
lasted.

May 18th 1916

We had orders to stand by, the bombardment of two days back, resulted in the 5th
South Lancs capturing 250yds of trenches at Foncquevillers, on the left of
Souastre, also capturing many prisoners, many wounded passed down the line.

May 21st 1916

We left Halloy and marched back to Souastre, a distance of 15 kilos.

May 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 1916

Much activity was taking place up in the line, and heavy bombardments, and B
company, being in the line had 8 casualties.

May 26th 1916

We had a free trip to the Divisional Concert Party "The Bow Belles".

May 27th 28th 29th 30th 31st 1916

We were making a road up the trenches, and named the new cutting "Cheshire
Cut", we had to march 5 kilos to work and 5 kilos back, passing through the
villages of Bayencourt and Sailly-au-Bois. On the 30th inst. we were shelled away

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from the work.

June 1st 1916

We started work on another road 1 kilo on the left of Bayencourt, also dug a gun pit for a 6" Howitzer.

June 2nd 3rd 1916

Carried on with the same work.

June 4th 1916

(Sunday) we had a rest, a cold bath, but a clean change of underclothing, a compulsory church service in the evening, in a old barn well within shelling range.

June 5th 1916

We worked in Bayencourt all day.

June 6th 1916

We had to pack our kits, and proceed up the line, we passed through Bayencourt, and then in artillery formation to Sailly-au-bois, and from here we marched in single file along a very muddy road, where in places men sank knee deep in mud, at last we reached the ruined town of Hebuterne, 400yds from our front line, there are no civilians here as the place is subject to heavy fire every day, we were billeted in the cellars of an old farm house which was minus a wall and the roof. I took a stroll round the place after tea and found it absolutely ruined a church at one end had been badly battered and the walls all smashed and the roof gone, one side of the tower standing only, but a noticeable fact was that a crufic [crucifix?] in a most conspicuous place remained untouched.

June 7th 1916

We left our billets and went to the edge of the village, moving undercover of the broken walls, then entered a communication trench called "Yale Street" (of y sector y29) moved along this trench in daylight for 300yds and then we were only 100yds from our own front line, and 400yds from the enemy front line, this "com" trench was in places only 3ft deep, and we were exposed to the enemy fire, and our own work was to deepen this trench to 7ft, also make it wide enough for two men to pass, no earth could be thrown on top, but had to be put in sandbags and passed down the trench.

Everything went well till 3 o'clock in the afternoon when "Jerry" started to strafe, and strafed us away from the work, and managed it without any casualties, during the time we were working we had to keep our equipment on, also rifles at hand, and leaving the trench we looked "rum cutters" being covered with mud and

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clay, all around the place were "gas alarms". This day was the first time I had been close to the enemy lines, and the first time I had got as far as a Support trench.

June 8th 1916

We worked in Yale Street Trench again, also in trench 48 which was much deeper, and about 10am our artillery opened a heavy strafe on the enemy trenches, and in reply the Germans shelled us heavily, and there being no dug outs here we were compelled to stick it, and chance our luck, there were no casualties, but four men got buried and had to be dug out, they were badly shaken, later a shell dropped on the parapet above four men and one had his leg blown off, and the trench was wrecked and we were compelled to move down a little way.

June 9th 1916

We fell in at 8-30p.m and entered "Wood Street communication trench" and passed the old fire trench and went up "New Wood Street" which was only about 2 ft deep, then got on the top, passed our front line which was being held by "The Rifle Rangers", through a gap in the barbed wire, we were paced out so many paces per man as a digging task, and told to dig ourselves in as quickly as possible. We worked hard for about 2 an hour when the Germans opened heavy machine gun fire on us and swept us like a blanket, and being only 100 yds from the enemy lines it proved very trying, we carried on, off and on, for : of an hour when, when he got more machine guns sweeping that sector, by this time my part of the trench was about 18" deep so I could lie in it.

The machine guns keep on sweeping and the enemy opened out a "miniweffer"² (trench mortar) barrage, four of our rifles were laying on the ground about 4 ft away and these got a direct hit, that was the last I saw of my rifle, also blew the trench away and left us as it were on the open ground.

The man in front of me called for help and on going to him I found he had a piece of shrapnel in the left shoulder blade, this was Private Joe (Hurnival of Runcorn), also he was hit on the lower middle part of the back, many men at this time were calling for help, out of our Platoon we had three casualties L/Cpl Fineflow who was hit in the back and the pieces had pierced the lungs he was vomiting a lot of blood, and Pte Edward Coalthorpe (of Chester) who was hit in ribs and left arm, one man in No10 Platoon was also hit, Stretcher Bearer

²Means mine thrower

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Mostan, he was serious as he was hit in the lower part of the stomach and between the legs, after we had got the wounded away we returned to billets, it was 6a.m.

June 10th 1916

We worked from 11 o'clock in the morning until 2.45 p.m. when we returned to our billets and fell in again at 8p.m. and worked on top in the same place as the night previous, and returned at 2 a.m, and we had one casualty, this being the Corporal Brooks who was hit in the right wrist, the centre of the wrist being blown clean out.

This night when a shell burst mud and stones flew all around and I had my knee cut through being struck with a stone. This was Whit Sunday morning.

June 11th 1916

I had my knee dressed by the Medical Officer, went to work in the Com trench, returned at 2.30p.m without a casualty and mounted guard at 4p.m. and we heard of the Russian advance on the eastern front.

June 12th 1916

I dismounted guard at 4p.m. and had to go out with the company same night, we fell in at 8.30p.m. returned at 2.30a.m., were wet through to the skin with rain, and in places the trenches were knee deep with water.

June 13th 1916

We worked from 10a.m to 2.30 p.m in a C.T. called Woman's St which was close up being at the end of Dead Mans Wood St, we carried on again from 9p.m to 11.30 p.m, when the enemy gave us a heavy trench mortar strafe.

This gradually got hotter and one mortar dropping on the parapet over us completely buried three of us, we were dug out and taken to the first aid Post and medically examined and found to be suffering from shock, we returned to the company next morning much better but a bit shaky.

June 14th 1916

Returned to the company at 10a.m and this afternoon two more men were buried in a dug-out, and one Private George Shaw (Chester) who joined the Battalion same day as myself was killed having both legs blown off, and the other Private Lol Beasley (Runcorn) had one leg blown off and was just alive when got out. I mounted guard this afternoon until 4p.m the following day.

June 15th 1916

Paraded at 7.30 p.m and dug on the top from the front line support to the fire

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trench, this new C.T was called New Yiddish Street (Y sector). The night was quiet except for a little machine gun fire, and returned to billet at 3 a.m.

June 16th 1916

We laid trench boards in "New Yiddish Street" from 10 a.m till 1 p.m and at night paraded at 9 p.m and dug a new ambulance trench from "Yale Street" to the new fire trench, the moon was full and the night very light, and we got heavy machine gun fire for 20 minutes, afterwards the night was very quiet. 2nd Lieut. Larne of our platoon was wounded by the machine gun fire in the ribs and legs.

June 17th 1916

We turned out at 11a.m to work but had to return at 12 noon as "Yale St" was being heavily shelled. We had a draft from (D) Company sent to us as our company had got so weak from men going to hospital with wounds and sickness. We paraded at 9p.m. and passed up "Calvary St", but had to wait a while as the Germans were shelling the woods heavily through which the trench passed. Whilst waiting a shrapnel shell burst overhead and one man Private Joe Orme (Runcorn) was hit in the face, the bottom lip being torn off and bottom teeth knocked out, afterwards we worked in "Young Street" running off the end of "Calvary Street", the night on the whole was quiet, but one of the reinforcements from D Company was killed being shot through the head with a machine gun bullet.

June 18th 1916

We worked as usual both morning and night, but all was quiet and we had no casualties.

June 19th 1916

This morning each man had two boxes of hand grenades to carry up to the front line trench and then we came back to billets and in the afternoon B Company came up to Hebuterne to relieve us and we marched back 10 kilos to Souastre and when passing through Sailly-Au-Bois and Bayencourt I noticed all the civilians had left their homes since we went up.

June 20th 1916

We left Souastre and marched through Henu and Pas to Grenas a village about 10kilos from Souastre, here we were still within sound of the guns and we were out for rest and training for an offensive.

June 21st 1916

I did sanitorys Cpls work for the company, and did a journey to Pommera, a village midway between Halloy and Grenas.

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June 22nd 23rd 24th 25th 26th 27th 1916
Carried on as on the 21st inst.

June 28th 1916

Stood to, till 2p.m then marched 10 kilos back to Souastre, passing through Pas and Henu; Souastre had changed a little as most of the civilians had taken refuge farther away from the line, we also heard of the death of Corporal Brooks who I previously stated as having been wounded, also we had many orders read out to us as we were to advance at the hour of zero in a day or so.

June 29th 1916

We stood to all day to move up but did not, the bombardment in the line was increasing everyday, and was now practically continual.

June 30th 1916

We stood to till 4p.m when we handed in our packs, and all personal effects, and started for the line, going forward in artillery formation, passed through Bayencourt, and Sailly-au-Bois up to Hebuterne, and the bombardment was more fierce than before and we knew we had to attack in the morning and the minutes seemed like hours.

July 1st 1916

After having had our rum issue we stood to till 7-25a.m when we put up a smoke screen and went over the top at 7-30 with the London Scottish and Queens Westminster Rifles, we took four lines of trenches from the Germans, but were driven back by midday to our original position, our losses were very heavy although we took many prisoners, I could not attempt to write all that happened this day, so I'll leave a cutting from the paper here. The casualties from my Battalion were A Company 112, B Company 62, C Company 91, D Company 25, in my platoon we lost the following men Lieutenant Leigh, who had taken over from Lieut. Larne, was wounded the left arm blown off, Private Harry Wakefield, Private Wilfred Carter, killed, Private Jack White, Private Frank Walker, missing, and Private Harry Frodsham, Private Sam Mellor, and Private George Parker wounded, L-Cpl R Eaton, and L-Cpl Harry Carveley wounded, the following men died of wounds during the following week Sgt Piers, L-Cpl J Kinsey, and Private Albert Clarke, Private Jack Perrin, and Private Sidney Jones, we left the line this night being too weak in numbers to hold it, and got back to Souastre about 12-30 p.m.

[newspaper cutting]

July 2nd 1916

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(Sunday) *We rested all day, and many of us are still a little shaky.*

July 3rd 1916

We had a number of reinforcements sent to us, and paraded at 9-30 p.m and moved up the line to Foncquevillers a little to the north of Hebuterne and were billeted in cellars, turned out to work at 11-p.m and went up the trenches and in places we were waist deep in water, and at last got to the fire trench and went on top and put out 150yds of barbed wire and returned to billets at 4-30 in the morning.

July 4th 1916

Put another 150 yds of barbed wire on the top and the trenches were still waist deep in water.

July 5th 1916

Just the same as the day before.

July 6th 1916

We were the only Platoon to go out working this night, and returned to billets 3a.m in the morning.

July 7th 1916

At 10 a.m we commenced an hours heavy strafe, and the Germans retaliated and shelled the village, at 2 p.m we went to the trenches and pumped water out till 7 p.m and had a night in for a rest.

July 8th 1916

We worked again from 9 a.m till 12 noon pumping water away and at 9 p.m had to go and dig a trench 80 yds long and revet it with sandbags to hold the sides up, and returned at 4-30 in the morning.

July 9th 1916

Paraded at 2 p.m and marched from Foncquevillers to Souastre and were swept by machine gun fire from a German airoplane, but we got back without a casualty.

July 10th 1916

We did nothing in the morning but at 7 p.m we left Souastre and marched through Bayencourt, Saily-Au-Bois to Hebuterne and mounted guard till 4 p.m on the 11th inst.

July 12th 1916

We went to work at 2a.m til 10a.m deepening and widening AWelcome St≅ C.T. this trench had been levelled by the bombardment of the 1st of July.

July 13th 1916

Carried on with the same work as the day previous in the same trench.

July 14th 1916

We worked in "Wood St" C.T. at 2a.m to pump water out as this trench was waist deep in water, at 3-30a.m we opened out a very heavy strafe and we went to help the London Scottish to hold our front line. The enemy opened out a counter strafe and the London Scottish raided the enemy line at 4a.m returning with 25 prisoners, we left after 5a.m and at 7p.m we left Hebuterne and marched back to Souastre glad to get away.

July 15th 1916

We got a full day's rest.

July 16th 1916

We marched to Saily-au-bois and commenced digging a dugout for the 169th Brigade Staff and at night had a memorial service for the chums we had lost lately.

July 17th 1916

We did same work as the day before, at night our Colonel presented a few Certificates for deeds on July 1st.

July 18th 19th 1916

We worked on the roads in Bayencourt.

July 20th 1916

Had a rest in the morning and proceeded to Hebuterne at 4p.m, arriving there at 7-30p.m, as we went a very round-about way as the enemy was shelling the roads for transport.

July 21st 1916

We turned out to work at 2a.m til 10a.m in "Wood St" C.T. and it was quiet, at 5a.m one of our airoplanes was hit and fell in our lines.

July 22nd 1916

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Worked same hours in "Welcome St" C.T. revetting³ it. The time was quiet only at Astand to≅ when we had a few Miniweffers over.

July 23rd 1916

Same hours, same work, same trench as the day previous.

July 24th 1916

Same hours, same work, same trench as before.

July 25th 1916

Same as before, but at 5a.m one of our trench mortars was knocked out in "New Welcome St", we were near support.

July 26th 27th and 28th 1916

Same hours, same work, same trench as before.

July 29th 1916

Working same as before but at 9a.m the Germans opened a heavy strafe on us and we had to seek safety in the cellar of a ruined house over our reserve line.

July 30th 1916

Working same as before but at 11-30a.m a German airoplane was brought down by our machine gunners, he fell in our lines.

July 31st 1916

One of our airoplanes was brought down by the Germans at 12 noon and working in "New Welcome St" C.T. against the fire trench frontline some mangled bodies were dug up.

August 1st 1916

We reached the front line with our revetting, and at noon we had to take cover as the Germans were strafing again. We left Hebuterne at 8-30p.m and marched back to Souastre for 6 days rest.

August 2nd 1916

³Means strengthening the sides of the trench with supporting timber or corrugated iron.

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We went in motor wagons through St Amand, Gaudiempre, Humbercamp to Saully loading them with stone and returning and unloading on the Souastre Bayencourt Road and then til 4p.m working on the road.

August 3rd 1916

Whilst working on same job as day before at 9a.m the Germans shelled Souastre with heavies killing five, wounded 18, and shook the village badly, some of the casualties were civilians.

August 4th 1916

Built a Y.M.C.A.

August 5th 1916

I had to go with a Pontoon wagon from Souastre through Henu and Pas to Mondicourt, there I loaded the wagon with timber and brought it back through Souastre and Bayencourt to Sailly-au-Bois for the Brigade Headquarters dug-out.

August 6th 1916

We did nothing in the morning but at night had a church service.

August 7th 1916

We left Souastre at 6 a.m and marched to Hebuterne, there was heavy shelling going on, we went to work at 6p.m in the trenches, and my work this night kept me on the top all night as soon as it was dusk, anchoring stakes back we worked til 2a.m

(This day was August Monday).

August 8th 9th 1916

We worked same as on the 7th inst.

August 10th 1916

Worked this morning in a trench about 10 yds from the billet, the Germans were shelling the village heavily, and about 12 o'clock noon a 5.9 was dropped direct on the billet, it killed Private Joe Orme, Private Harry Percival, and Private Dick Hearne, it wounded Private Hazelhurst, Coalthorpe, Duckworth, and Barton, and Private George Hunt (my chum) got shell-shock, losing his speech and use of his limbs, the billet took fire, but was quickly put out, and the rescue of dead and wounded went on, afterwards we had to find fresh billets in cellars which was much safer, everyone was fagged out and done, but what few were left in the Platoon had to go to work at 6p.m till 2a.m and about 8p.m an enemy airoplane swept us with machine gun fire.

August 11th 1916

We fortified our cellar by sandbagging it all round and on top, went to the trenches at 6p.m and while still daylight we were again swept with machine gun fire from a German airoplane, also he signalled to their artillery who opened out and we had to fall back, later on the Germans fired Miniweffers on our job, also we were bombed, so we had a lively night of it, but got no casualties.

August 12th 1916

We worked same as on the 11th inst. but the night was quiet.

August 13th 1916

I was posted to the machine gunners for guards, in Hebuterne, and found it better.

August 14th 1916

We had one machine gunner wounded in the leg, Gunner Carrol, I had to take over his post, shelling was heavy all day, and had been so the last few days.

August 15th 1916

Same as day before, the shelling was increasing.

August 16th 1916

Same as day before, the shelling was increasing in intensity.

August 17th 1916

Same as day before, the shelling was now like a continual bombardment.

August 18th 1916

We left Hebuterne, being relieved by another Division at 4p.m, we were pleased to see the last of it, but had to get away in a roundabout manner as the shelling was very heavy, reached Souastre about 6p.m.

August 19th 1916

Rested all day.

August 20th 1916

We left Souastre at 8 a.m and marched though Henu and Pas and Mondicourt to Doullens a large town and here there were plenty of civilians, we reached the town about 2 p.m having marched 18 kilos.

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August 21st 1916

I had to mount guard at 6 p.m and at 4-30 a.m I had to dismount.

August 22nd 1916

Dismounted guard at 4-30 a.m and fell in with my Platoon, and we marched from Doullens through Occoches, Temple-le-Grood, Auxile-Chateau to Hierment a distance of 25 kilos.

August 23rd 1916

We left Hierment at 7 a.m and marched through Yooniux, Oneux to St Riquier, a distance of 17 kilos, where we understood we were going to have a rest, this was the stiffest march I had ever been on having done 60 kilos in three marches in three days.

August 24th 1916

We drilled all day and at night I had a look round St Riquier and found it a very nice town.

August 25th 1916

We drilled all day.

August 26th 1916

We drilled all day, and put out barbed wire entanglements for practice.

August 27th 1916

We had a church parade and the best days rest we'd had, and at night a thunder storm.

August 28th 1916

Drilled all day.

August 29th 1916

Had to go on a course of instruction on the Lewis machine gun, it poured with rain, got drenched to the skin.

August 30th 31st 1916

Same as on the 29th.

September 1st 1916

Same as on the previous day, only we stood by after 12 noon.

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September 2nd 1916

Stood by all day awaiting orders.

September 3rd 1916

We had a church parade and stood by for the remainder of the day.

September 4th 1916

We packed up and entrained and passed through Abbeville and to Corbie, to the Somme front.

September 5th 1916

Rested all day in Corbie.

September 6th 1916

We marched from Corbie to a camp between Bray and Bronfray farm, near Maricourt.

September 7th 1916

We left camp and went 4 kilos nearer the line and bivouac in the ground, and passed over the newly conquered ground and went forward at night and dug a new communication trench, were heavily shelled and had 15 casualties, in our platoon we had three casualties, Sgt Prince, Sgt Oldham and Private Mitchem.

September 8th 1916

Finished the work of the night before, also found the body of Sgt Oldham who we buried on the spot. We had many casualties this night.

September 9th 1916

Went over the top in an attack by the Brigade, reversed the parapets of the front line⁴, which we had established, came back 50yds dug a new front line support, returned having had 25 casualties, in our Platoon we had Corporal Hodgkinson, Privates Haddon, Cook and Dugnough.

September 10th 1916

Carried on with another job making a Divisional Dugout with the Royal

⁴*Re-orientated the trench to face towards the Germans. It had previously been a German trench.*

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Engineers.

September 11th & 12th 1916

The same as the 10th inst, but on this night, we left and marched to the line.

September 13th 1916

This is my birthday but it was spent in the trenches, and the Somme Battle went on, we found we were entrenched on the edge of Leuze Wood.

September 14th 1916

Repaired the trenches around and made ready to attack, suffered heavy casualties.

September 15th 1916

We made a big attack at Leuze Wood and advanced 1 mile in depth taking four lines of trenches, we had 12 large caterpillars to help in this attack, which begun at 4-30 a.m, our losses were slight in comparison with the Germans, our Battalion was withdrawn at 10-30 p.m being too weak to hold the line.

September 16th 1916

We rested all day and at night we had reinforcements sent to us, and went forward and dug an advanced fire trench, but the guide took us the wrong way, and led us into the enemy lines, the Germans opened a heavy fire on us, and we retired hastily but with casualties, Company Commander Captain Dickson being wounded, Platoon Officer Second Lieutenant Clements and 12 other rank also wounded, two died very shortly after.

September 22nd 1916

I had lost count of the days, but up to today we had had 376 casualties in the Battalion, and we were working every night in the lines leaving our dug-out at 5p.m and returning at 6 a.m, our attacks kept carrying us farther ahead.

September 27th 1916

We left High Wood and Leuze Wood sector and marched back 7 kilos to a place just outside Meaulte and rested two days, had four lots of reinforcements, and our casualties to date were 430.

September 30th 1916

We left this camp and marched through Carnoy, passed Trones Wood and Guillemont, and dug in at the rear of Rouleaux Wood.

October 1st 1916

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We advanced again along with the French who were in touch with us on our right, we took four lines of trenches from the Germans, captured Combles and I sustained a severe cut on the leg with barbed wire, and it bled badly but I had to carry on.

October 10th 1916

We came out of the line at 10-30p.m and we had suffered very heavy casualties and only numbered about 500 strong after going in about 850 strong.

October 11th 1916

We came down to the Citadel and had a days rest.

October 12th 13th 1916

Great pain in the leg and so I fell sick, the cut will not heal up.

October 14th 15th 1916

Working with R.E. loading wagons.

October 16th 1916

We left the Citadel and marched through Meautle and Dernancourt and boarded trucks and went to the village of Conde[-Folie] the other side of Amiens.

October 17th 18th 1916

Rested at Conde.

October 19th 1916

Finished four day No1 Field Punishment for eating emergency rations without permission.

October 21st 1916

Left Conde and marched to Hallencourt a distance of 10 kilos.

October 22nd 23rd 24th 1916

Drilling all day, on a so called rest.

October 25th 1916

We left Hallencourt and entrained at Pont-Remy and detrained early on the 26th at Guarbecque, and marched through St Venant to St Floris.

October 26th 27th 28th 1916

Rested at St Floris and on the 28th we marched to a village about 3 kilos away

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and here I was picked up by motor along with four others and taken to the R.E.
Workshops in Bethune to work.

October 29th 1916

Started working as a fitter on explosives in the R.E. Workshops of the 1st Army
Corps. Nothing to report until the following date.

November 26th 1916

The Germans shelled Bethune heavily and I have being [sic] having much pain in
the leg.

December 23rd 1916

The Germans again shelled Bethune heavily, causing heavy casualties in both
soldiers and civilians.

December 25th 1916

Christmas day, had a day off.

December 26th 1916

The Germans came over in airoplanes dropped bombs and swept the streets with
machine guns.

January 2nd 1917

Finished working nights, came on days, and leg getting very bad.

January 13th 1917

Was admitted into hospital with my leg being so bad.

January 14th 1917

Left the Field Ambulance Hospital in Bethune, and went by motor car to the
Casualty Clearing Station at Lillers.

January 15th 1917

Went by the Ambulance from Lillers to Etaples, and stayed one night.

January 16th 1917

Left Etaples and went in the Ambulance train to Rouen where I was admitted
into no 7 General Hospital and treated for septic ulcers in the leg and ankle.

January 25th 1917

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Got up for half a day.

January 26th 1917

Up all day.

January 29th 1917

Was discharged from hospital supposed to be better, and drafted to No. 4 Infantry Base.

February 1st 1917

Word had come through about me being transferred to the R. E.s after passing a test at the Workshops, and I was drafted to No.2 Royal Engineers Terretorial Base, we are having a severe frost.

February 21st 1917

Left Rouen at 12 noon went up the line to Bethune and arrived at 2a.m. on the 23rd and started work at 8a.m.

February 24th 1917

Got my new pay entered up at Royal Engineers rate $1/2 + 1/4 = 2/6$ a day.

February 25th 1917

Leg broke out again and I had a special permit to attend hospital every day.

March 19th 1917

My leg got very bad and when attending hospital the Medical Officer thought it best to detain me.

March 20th 1917

I left Bethune as a stretcher case and went to Chocques where I was operated on, a large abscess being cut out.

March 22nd 1917

I left Casualty Clearing Station at Chocques and went in the Ambulance Train to Etaples where I was admitted into St. John's Hospital.

March 24th 1917

Placed on an Ambulance Train and conveyed to Calais, marked for dear old England.

March 25th 1917

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I was placed on board the Hospital Ship Newhaven and crossed the Straits and landed at Dover, it was a Sunday and England looked beautiful and everybody gay. I was put on an English Hospital Train and taken across London up north to Bradford, Yorkshire, and admitted into Ci Ward of Bradford War Hospital.

March 26th 1917

Was nice and comfortable in bed, leg very bad.

April 25th 1917

I left hospital and went home on ten days sick leave and I started courting Kate Barlow of 21 Park St, Castle. She had written to me in hospital, and my leg was on the bad side the whole time.

May 4th 1917

I left home and went to the Royal Engineers Command Depot at Thetford, Norfolk and I was here undergoing treatment to get my leg strong, I drew the whole of my credit, and I stayed at this Depot which was hell itself till...

January 6th 1918

When I underwent another very slight operation to have the sinews of my leg fastened again.

January 16th 1918

I left Thetford and marked category Aiii I was drafted to Newark, Nottinghamshire, and posted to No.11 Company, Royal Engineers Training Depot, Coddington Hall.

January 23rd 1918

I had a telegram telling me of the sudden death of my dear Dad Mr Edward Alfred Littler.

January 24th 1918

I proceeded home and a very sad home too.

January 26th 1918

Placed my dear Dad at Rest in St Johns Churchyard, Hartford.

February 2nd 1918

Leave expired and had to leave my dear Mother all alone this time, but my sister Mrs G Ward did her best.

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February 12th 1918

I was marked Category Ai and considered fit to go abroad again.

March 8th 1918

I went home on draft leave.

March 15th 1918

I returned to my unit and was informed I was to proceed with a draft to Salonica.

March 17th 1918

I left No. 11 Company at Coddington Hall and was posted to No.5 the Draft Company, ready to go to Salonica.

March 20th 1918

The Salonica draft was cancelled and the same draft was marked for France, as a big enemy offensive is taking place against us.

March 29th 1918

It is Good Friday and at 1-30a.m we left Newark to proceed to France, a draft of 150 strong. We had breakfast at the Union Jack Club, London and left Waterloo Station at 2-0p.m and arrived at Southampton at 4-0p.m and went straight on board the St George transport Ship, and sailed away from the docks at 6-0p.m again leaving dear Old England behind.

March 30th 1918

We disembarked from the St George at 6-0 a.m at Le Havre and proceeded to the Rest Camp, and stayed there till 8p.m when we marched to the station and boarded the train for Rouen, but the train did not leave till 2-0 a.m and in the meantime it poured with rain.

March 31st 1918

The train left Le Havre at 2-0a.m and we arrived in Rouen at 10-0a.m and marched up the Rue de Calais to the Royal Engineers Base Depot, and immediately we drew rifles, bayonets, iron rations, oil sheets, blankets, sheep skin coats, and ammunition.

April 1st 1918

We were issued with our gas respirators, and went through our gas test.

April 2nd & 3rd 1918

We stood to ready to go up the line, the enemy offensive on the Somme was still

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going strong.

April 4th 1918

We left Rouen at 4-0p.m and boarded the train in cattle trucks, and proceeded up to the firing line, and as dusk drew on we passed through Abbeville.

April 5th 1918

We are still in the train and at 0-0a.m we passed through Tilques and at 11-20 we stopped at Hazebrouck, we went on after to the rail-head at Weursveldt, and marched to Steenvoorde a distance of 8 kilos on the borders of Belgium.

April 6th 1918

We marched from Steenvoorde to Poperinghe a distance of 14 kilos and reached our Brigade, the 122 Brigade of the 41st Division in the 1st Army, and posted to the 228th Field Company Royal Engineers, and I was posted to the strength of No4 Section. Our Army Commander was General Plumer, our Divisional Commander was General Lawford, and our Company Commander Major Shaw M.C.

April 7th 1918

It was Sunday and we had a days rest.

April 8th 1918

We paraded at 8-0a.m and left School camp at Poperinghe and marched through Brandhoek and Vlamertinghe to Ypres, a distance of 14 kilos, Ypres was practically flat.

April 9th 1918

We stood to all day for work but luckily none came.

April 10th 1918

Stood to all day and at 9-0p.m we had to pack up hurriedly, and 1 & 2 Sections went up the main Menin and Potijze roads and mined the roads, and 3 and 4 Sections were mining bridges across Ypres and Comines Canal, and worked till midday next day, the reason for this was because the Germans had started another big offensive against us, in the Northern Sector on the 1st Army Corps.

April 11th 1918

We returned from work at midday tired out.

April 12th 1918

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I saw a furious battle in the air this morning, 4 German planes engaging three British, 2 German planes and two British came down and fell in our lines, 1 German plane caught fire and fell in his own lines, the other one made his escape, and the remaining British plane hovered above and then made off. In the afternoon we had to go and re-mine a bridge crossing the Ypres Canal, placing 70 lbs of guncotton under it, and connected with both electric and instantaneous fuse, finished at midnight.

April 13th 1918

We paraded at 8-0 a.m and worked on the same bridge as the night before, and I was detailed off to patrol the bridge from 8-0p.m till 8a.m next morning, the shelling in Ypres [now Leperes] was very heavy and we had one man wounded Sapper Bert Mills, but other detachments in the town suffered heavily.

April 14th 1918

(Sunday) I came off guard at 8-0a.m and got down to sleep, but had to parade at 2-0p.m, hand in pack with all personal effects, and went up the Menin [now Menen] Road and dug a line of trenches for the infantry to fall back on, as the Germans had advanced on both sides of us, and we were in a salient and were forced to evacuate Passchondale ridge, many towns and villages fell in his hands.

April 15th 1918

We carried on with the same work as the day before, also did some barbed wiring entanglements.

April 16th 1918

We were laying a mine under the Menin road and railway, and completed the work, also a bridge at 150yds distance towards Ypres, and 6 of us were detailed off to guard the mine the whole night while the infantry and artillery fell back to new positions.

April 17th 1918

After the infantry had fallen back and the rear guard had crossed the 1st mine, we blew up the road successfully, and retired to the bridge, and the infantry had then got across that, and Lieutenant Read blew up the bridge, and Major Shaw, M.C. our O.C. stood by to watch it go up, and a flying missile struck him in the back, killing him instantly, and we carried him back to Ypres.

April 17th 1918 [second entry]

I was detailed off to bury our O.C. along with 6 others, and buried just outside our Orderly Room, Lieutenant Read is very ill.

April 18th 1918

Lieutenant Read is much better, we were up in the line working all day, we had one casualty, Sapper Brown being wounded in the arm.

April 19th 1918

We were up in the line working all day.

April 20th 1918

We left Ypres at 9a.m and marched back 4 kilos to Vlamertyngh, and paraded for work on the horse lines at 1p.m. till 6p.m.

April 21st 22nd 1918

We were stripping the field in the rear of Ypres of all obstacles in case we had to evacuate Ypres hurriedly, both nights we were bombed and swept with machine gun fire from the airoplanes.

April 23rd 1918

We prepared a strong reserve line in the rear of Ypres.

April 24th 1918

We finished the work of the day before.

April 25th 1918

(Thursday) There was a terrible bombardment along the whole sector all day, and I, with an officer and a party of infantry mined a bridge on the Vlamertyngh and Poperinghe railway, also started to mine another bridge on the Vlamertyngh and Ypres railway.

April 26th 1918

Finished the bridge of the day before and were called back to stand by in billets, the bombardment is going much more strong.

April 27th 1918

Still standing by and in the afternoon had to go to the front line and support the infantry over on right, as the Germans were making heavy attacks on us, and we had to fall back and the enemy finally captured Kemmill Hill, we lost many men and the shelling was terrible, we were withdrawn from the line about midnight.

April 28th 1918

Rested all day in billets in Vlamertyngh, The battle for Kemmill Hill continued

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and the French were rushed up, we had two batches of reinforcements.

April 29th 1918

We had to leave our billets at Vlamertynghe as the battle grew worse, as late last night the French retook Kemmill Hill, and the Germans were again attacking to retake it.

April 30th 1918

The Germans recaptured Kemmill Hill, and towards evening a lull came over the artillery, we worked all night digging in, in the rear of Kemmill and Locre and in front of Scherkenburgh Hill, the dead lying around were numerous from both sides.

May 1st 1918

The enemy did not attack this day; at night we cleared the ground of the dead which were thousands, and it was a sickening job.

May 2nd 1918

We made a strong line in front of Vlamertynghe, and made permanent billets in Dirty Bucket Camp.

May 3rd 1918

We finished the trench, the Germans got range of it and shelled it, we had one casualty, Sapper Mac Muir.

May 4th 5th 1918

Went sick fed up with work & war.

May 6th 1918

Went on parade, and we worked in front of Vlamertynghe, mining a bridge near the Vlamertynghe Chateau the Belgian residence of General Von Bissing, Nurse Cavells murderer.

May 7th 1918

We finished the work of the day before.

May 8th 1918

During heavy fire we mined the road leading to Vlamertynghe Chateau, and blew down trees which were proving to be range marks for the enemy.

May 9th 1918

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I was detailed off to put water pipes in the Area Commandants Camp.

May 10th 1918

Finished the work of the day before.

May 11th 1918

We moved up the line to Ypres again, and I was placed on guard over one of the mined bridges.

May 12th 1918

I came off guard at 8a.m and was detailed off to work at night, I turned out to work at 8p.m returned at 3a.m, I was in charge of 30 infantry men connecting up posts, we were shelled going up and coming back, we had to pass through a gas barrage, thrown over by gas shells, and we had a very rough time with High Velocity Shells bursting on the lines.

May 13th 1918

(Monday) I continued working on the post and it poured with rain, and at 1a.m were shelled off the job with whizz-bangs, my infantry party had two casualties, (Hampshires).

May 14th 1918

I continued on the same work on the front line by the White Chateau on the Menin Road.

May 15th 1918

I carried on as I did the night before and we had a gas barrage to pass through and heavy shelling and my infantry party of Hampshires had one casualty.

May 16th 1918

We were shelled off the job with a whizz-bang and gas barrage, but got clear without any casualties.

May 17th 1918

We were heavily shelled with gas shells, 5.9 high explosives, and low bursting shrapnel, we were caught in the barrage and my party of Royal West Kents had two killed and seven wounded, including the Platoon Officer.

May 18th 1918

Carried on with the same job, were heavily shelled, but had no casualties.

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May 19th 1918

Carried on with the same work on the same trench, were heavily shelled with gas shells, but no casualties (Whitsunday)

May 20th 1918

Carried on with the same work on the same trench, no casualties.

May 21st 1918

Worked in between the Menin and Potijze Roads, camouflaging.

May 22nd 1918

Carried on with the fire trench I was on, on the 20th inst.

May 23rd 24th 1918

Finished the trench, it being A framed, revetted, and duck boarded.

May 25th 1918

Started building new breastwork along the trench, commencing by the White Chateau on the Potijze Road.

May 26th 1918

Continued with the breastwork and were heavily shelled the whole night, and coming back had a gas barrage of 2 2 miles to pass through.

May 27th 1918

Stood to all day and had a night off work at night.

May 28th 1918

Went out on a wiring party working 100 yds to the left of Zillebeke Lake, in front of Spoil Bank, and our walk to work and back took us through Ecole village, which was badly smashed.

May 29th 1918

Carried on same as night before and were heavily shelled.

May 30th 1918

Same as night before, but finished the work having put out 1,000 yds of barbed wire entanglements, we had one casualties [sic] this night.

May 31st 1918

I was working on the right of Calvary Road in the support line.

June 1st 1918

I had charge of a working party digging a new front line on the right of Calvary Road.

June 2nd 1918

(Sunday) We carried out a big raid on the Germans, it was a complete mess up and utter failure.

June 3rd 1918

We were relieved from Ypres by the 36th Division and we had held it successfully for two months, it was the key to the Calais defences, and marched 14 kilos to Ball Camp between Poperinghe and Watou.

June 4th 1918

We marched from Ball Camp to Proven, loaded the 122nd Brigade Transport on the train and entrained ourselves for St. Omer arriving at 2a.m.

June 5th 1918

Detrained at St. Omer at 2am unloaded the Brigade Transport and marched through Tilques, Brassion, and Houle to Gans-Pette, a distance of 22 kilos.

June 6th 1918

We had an easy day, I took a walk to Watten, and we are out on rest until the following date, it's a beautiful little village, we had football matches whilst resting here.

June 25th 1918

We left Ganspette and marched 27 kilos through Watten to a farm 3 kilos the other side of Borsouck, nearer the line our rest at an end.

June 26th 1918

We left the farm and marched through Borsouck to Wormhout a distance of 12 kilos.

June 27th 1918

Rested all day.

June 28th 1918

Left Wormhout and marched through Steenwoorde to L'Abeelee a distance of 17

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kilos. Steenwoorde was very badly battered about and in a fearful state, and at our billet we were shelled.

June 29th 1918

We pulled down Nissen Bow huts to build Divisional Headquarters with; farther behind, heavy shelling at night.

June 30th 1918

(Sunday) same as day before.

July 1st 1918

Same as day before.

July 2nd 3rd 1918

Worked on L'Abeele airodrome.

July 4th 1918

Building DHQ about 3 kilos behind L'Abeele until further date.

July 10th 1918

On Lewis gun guard at billets had an awful scrap with an enemy airoplane, and I got a very slight wound across the tip of the nose, the blighter got back after killing four men and wounding ten horses.

July 14th 1918

We finished working on DHQ.

July 15th 1918

We left our billets and marched 6 kilos nearer the line, and billeted in bivouacs, on the right of Reninghelst and on the left of Boechepe, we had a terrible thunderstorm and got washed out.

July 16th 1918

We were working in the line and there was very heavy shelling and my work was guiding transport to Steenacre dump on the side of Scherpenburg Hill, facing Kemmill Hill. Sapper Harry Barker of No.1 section got wounded in the knee, and Sapper Len Wheelhouse in the arm and jaw.

July 17th 1918

Same work as night before, very heavy shelling, we had two horses killed and a driver and one horse wounded.

July 18th 19th 1918

Same work as before, but very heavy shelling.

July 20th 1918

Took a load to 122 Brigade Headquarters, went on and left a load 124 BHQ, called at 123 BHQ and brought a load back to 122 BHQ and coming through Reninghelst were compelled to wear our gasmasks for 2 an hour.

July 21st 1918

Went to 122 BHQ and then on to Distoire Dump.

July 22nd 1918

Same journey as night before and got heavily shelled had a driver and one horse killed, and another horse wounded and the dray smashed up.

July 23rd 1918

Same journey as night before, shelling heavier, on the Loere Road, Sapper Evans killed, Corporal Mitchell wounded and Sapper Dyier wounded.

July 24th 1918

Had 24 hours rest.

July 25th 1918

Working on the Reninghelst and L'Abeele road.

July 26th 1918

Started work on a new Aid Post on the Reninghelst and L'Abeele road.

July 27th 1918

Same work as on the 26th inst.

July 28th 1918

Went to Reninghelst and cut down 330 feet of joists from shattered houses, loaded Pontoon and General Service Wagons, at 10-30 and unloaded at aid post at 12-45 got back to billets at 2-0 a.m.

July 29th 1918

Same as night before.

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July 30th 1918

Worked at aid post again, at night our camps were shelled, an 8" was dropped by the Americans camp, killing and wounding 4, these Americans were attached to us.

July 31st 1918

Worked same place, and [at] night were again shelled with gas, but no casualties.

August 1st 1918

We had an enemy 8" shell H.E. drop on the road as we were going to work and the casualties were 1 Highland Light Infantry Private killed and four wounded and seven Americans wounded, and at night our camp was again shelled.

August 2nd 1918

Carried on at the R.A.P. and had a 20 ton of earth fall in the pit, the ground being so sodden and one man Sapper Badderly was crushed and both legs broken.

August 3rd 1918

Carried on at the R.A.P.

August 4th 1918

The anniversary of the war, very heavy shelling on both sides.

August 5th 6th 7th and 8th 1918

Working on the R.A.P.

August 9th 1918

Our camp heavily shelled, and I was brought back from the R.A.P. job and did some strict training for the remainder of the day, mining and blowing up barbed wire entanglements, preparing for a raid.

August 10th 1918

More training for the raid, which we understand is going to be a big one.

August 11th 1918

Same as yesterday and my work on the raid will be fuse runner and connector.

August 12th 1918

Rested till 7pm and then set out for the line, we had our orders at 10p.m, the raid being made on 4 separate machine gun posts and 4 sappers going over to each post and 50 infantry men and an officer at each post. No.1 and 2 Sappers

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of our 4 carried a torpedo candeloe and placed it under the enemy wire entanglement, no.3 ran the fuse from the front line to the candeloe and connected up, no.4 brought the Exploder and connected with the fuse and blew the wire. The infantry rushed the gap and captured the occupants of the posts and made them prisoners. There was very heavy shelling the whole night and we got to the infantries company HQ at 1am. Out of 200 infantry men who went over 35 are missing and out of 16 Sappers 7 are not accounted for, we captured 44 prisoners and 8 machine guns, I got a good souvenir in the way of a German revolver, and we got back to our camp at 8 a.m.

August 13th 1918

Got back to camp at 8am from the raid of the night before, and rested for the remainder of the day. Camp shelled at night.

August 14th 1918

Heavier shelling than previous, we did nothing all day, my nerves are much steadier than yesterday.

August 15th 1918

Had another day off.

August 16th & 17th 1918

Worked on the R.A.P. again, the shelling is getting more severe.

August 18th 1918

Went working in front of Scherpenbergh Hill, our front line lying in front of it and the German front line in front of Kemmill Hill leaving a space of 200 yds "no-man's land", my work was in charge of infantry wiring party cutting out barbwire entanglements in front of "Margery Post" (a section of our front line) the night on the whole was quiet but plenty of machine gun fire.

August 19th 1918

Went working same place as night before and got out 250yds with 10 men of a infantry party, the night was quiet but for machine gun fire which was incessant.

August 20th 1918

Went working same place as night before got out 100yds by 11.45pm when we had to leave off work as the 36th Division on our right were going to make a slight advance.

August 21st 1918

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We could not get to our work at 9-30pm for a gas barrage, got to the job at 10-45pm worked till 11-30 when the enemy opened out a very heavy barrage and counter-attacked the position he had lost this morning early, we had to retire back into the trench, the bombardment was like Hell let loose, it died down a bit at 1am and we went out again to our job after losing 3 men from our party wounded, we worked till 2-30am and the shelling became very heavy again and we had another private wounded, so I knocked the party off work and went back to the trench, I got a slight cut on the thigh from a piece of stone, blown up where a shell burst.

August 22nd 1918

Went on wiring in front of front line Majorie Post, second wire belt, much machine gun fire, and heavy shelling but no casualties.

August 23rd 1918

Wiring first belt in front of our outpost, night a little quieter, but leaving work got held up with an enemy barrage from 1-45 till 2-30 am then got clear.

August 24th 1918

Carried on same job as before, night very quiet, too quiet to be any good.

August 25th 1918

Leaving off work had to return to front line trench, as the 182nd Bavarian regiment were making a raid on us, but so many working parties being at hand, they were repulsed, very heavy shelling all night, and much harassing machine gun fire, very little work done.

August 26th 1918

Wiring front line, night fairly quiet, many dead lying about from the night before.

August 27th 1918

Change of work, putting fire steps up in the support line.

August 28th 1918

Wiring the support, night very rough, much shelling, machine gun fire and trench mortaring, two casualties in working party, one died when being got into the trench.

August 29th 1918

We paraded at 7 p.m and marched down the line to Boeschepe going out on rest and stayed at a farm.

August 30th 1918

The transport moved off down, we are to follow tomorrow.

August 31st 1918

Very big fires are seen in the line villages and fields are all ablaze, we are not moving at present, but standing by.

September 1st 1918

Our rest is cancelled and our transport has returned and at 6p.m we marched to Bussetoom by Poperinghe, we went to work at 12p.m in the line putting up a bridge so that our artillery could advance, as the enemy had evacuated a large amount of territory round Messines, Wytschack Ridge, St Eloi, and Voormezeele, we were working by Voormezeele, we worked under heavy fire and past daylight, and got back to billet at 10a.m.

September 2nd 1918

Got back to billets at 10a.m rested remainder of the day.

September 3rd 1918

We went up to Dickebusch village at night and made the road passable for transport leaving work at 1a.m.

September 4th 1918

Worked from 1 noon till 4 p.m on wagons and pontoons.

September 5th 1918

Was working in Ouderdom village all day.

September 6th 1918

Was working in Ouderdom village till 10a.m then recalled to camp, we left Bussetoom and marched to the advanced billets, for the remainder of the day I was working on a dug out for Lieutenant Read, finishing at 7-30p.m.

September 7th 1918

Worked all night clearing the Dickebusch roads of debris and making them all passable for front line transport.

September 8th 1918

Cut physines for trenches and at night the transport took them up to a forward dump, and were heavily shelled, and had two horses killed, and two wounded and

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three drivers wounded but the Cpl i c got the material up with what transport was left.

September 9th 1918

Worked all night on the support line, we were heavily shelled but had no casualties.

September 10th 1918

Same as night before.

September 11th 1918

Could not get to the job for shelling.

September 12th 1918

We got to the job and were shelled off it.

September 13th 1918

My 21st birthday I spent the night working on the support.

September 14th 1918

Worked on the same support line, which is called "our line of opposition" we had one shell very close to us, it was a miracle nobody was hit.

September 15th 1918

never got to the job for heavy shelling, but we worked to the left of the post.

September 16th 1918

Very heavy shelling whilst on the job, and a heavy strafe from midnight to 2a.m

September 17th 1918

Night much quieter on the trench but very heavy shelling on the Voormezele, Halebast, and Dickebusch roads.

September 18th 1918

Night fairly quiet on the trench, but heavy shelling on the La Clythe and Voormezele reserve trench line.

September 19th 1918

Very heavy shelling on the back areas, the Cpl i c transport is recommended for D.C.M for the stunt of September 8th.

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September 20th 1918

Left our forward billets and moved back to Reninghelst. Worked as usual at night.

September 21st 1918

Worked on same support line.

September 22nd & 23rd 1918

Stood by waiting orders for the line, we all know we are going to make a big attack, but when we don't know.

September 24th 1918

Still standing by and built huts close to the billets.

September 25th 1918

Still standing by.

September 26th 1918

Built new Divisional headquarters at Ouderdom.

September 27th 1918

Left Reninghelst at 6-30p.m and marched to a billet 2 kilos the other side of Ouderdom.

September 28th 1918

Left billets at 5-30a.m drew picks and spades, and marched to Cafe Belge, fully equipped, at the same time the infantry are advancing well, worked our way later through Voormezele, making all roads fit for transport as we went, I worked till 8p.m and then billeted at night in dug outs that were occupied by the enemy this morning, many prisoners have been taken and still coming in our casualties are light, we in our company have had 12 today including one officer.

September 29th 1918

Left our dug outs and made the road good round by Spoil Bank, and Hill 60, and past Battle Wood, over Blighty Bridge, both yesterday and today have been wet through to the skin, the infantry have again advanced a great way in depth, at night we billeted in a sap in Spoil Bank.

September 30th 1918

Made the road good through Hollebeke, wet through again, the enemy is still retiring, at night billeted in concrete dugouts at Houthem.

October 1st 1918

Worked on the road through Zandvoorde, and in the distance we could see the town Comines which fell into our hands this morning, at night returned to billets in Houthem, the day fine, the enemy has left many guns, and prisoners are still coming in, our casualties are light, many towns and villages are ablaze in the enemy lines.

October 2nd 1918

Cut a new road leading to Zandvoorde, and after finishing returned to billets at Houthem.

October 3rd 1918

My section went over with the infantry in the advance, we laid Candeloe Torpedoes on his lines and blew them up, returned to Houthem at night, the enemy is now driven back to the outskirts of Menin.

October 4th 1918

Worked and made divisional Headquarters on the main Menin Road, below Zillebeke, at night billeted in bivouacs in Zillebeke.

October 5th 1918

Rested till night then went forward and made a bridge over a stream to enable the artillery to advance, the work is on the right of Dadizeele in front of Terhand facing Ledgeham.

October 6th 1918

Finished the bridge off properly under heavy fire all the time.

October 7th 1918

We made a good road leading from Menin Road Stone Dump to Dadizeele under heavy fire all day, and returned to same billets Zillebeke.

October 8th 1918

Working on the same road closer to the line all day, Sapper Dick Kinlok, and Sapper Syd Inch very badly wounded, shell fire terrific all day.

October 9th 1918

Working closer up all day, shell fire behind us, no casualties, at night moved our billet back towards Tower Hamlets.

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October 10th 1918

Working same place, heavy fire all day, no casualties.

October 11th 1918

Same as day previous.

October 12th 1918

Worked same as day before at night moved billets to a large sap in Westhoek Ridge.

October 13th 1918

Moved up to forward positions ready for a very big attack.

October 14th 1918

In very severe fighting all day, the enemy put up a slight resistance with his infantry, but his artillery shelled us with shells which burst overhead and liquid fire dropped on us, we had many badly burnt, and killed. We advanced a depth of eight kilometres captured many villages. We worked our way forward through gas to the town of Werwick, thousands of prisoners came in, Menin town all ablaze in the distance, this was ground held by the enemy since his 1914 advance, at night I had to guide the transport up to our new billet in Werwick, we had a very rough night of it. The shelling was very heavy.

October 15th 1918

We left our billets and worked on the roads and at night billeted in firing butts at Terhand.

October 16th 1918

We left our billets at Terhand and marched to Moorseele, from which the enemy had driven out this morning, I returned to Terhand and guided the transport back to Moorseele, at night we were heavily bombed.

October 17th 1918

Worked on Divisional Headquarters at Dadizeele, still same billets and went without rations this day to feed civilians who fell into our hands starving.

October 18th 1918

Stood to all day, in same billets.

October 19th 1918

Left billets and went forward 14 kilos to build a bridge across the river Lys at

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Courtrai and 2nd Corporal W Mather and myself crossed the Lys on two planks with a Lewis gun and ammunition and lay out all night covering the company while they worked we also had infantry covering parties, it poured all night long, very heavy fire prevailed all night, and Lieutenant Archebald, and Lieutenant Harper MC were wounded, Sappers Penney and Gill killed, and Sappers Brooke, Dean and Blackmore wounded.

October 20th 1918

Left our billets at Moorseele and marched through Gulleghem, Heule to Bisseghem at night we got called out to make a large raft on the river Lys to take very heavy guns across on, as the bridge had been blown up, by the enemy during his retreat, the raft was completed by midday on the 21st.

October 21st 1918

We completed the raft by midday had dinner and then twelve of us were detailed off to take a battery of 60 pounders across, we worked until dark, and slept on the job.

October 22nd 1918

Making a heavy raft and using a barge to make it, the job would have been a complete success but for Lieutenant Kelsey who messed the job up, and after six hours work the blessed concern sunk crossways in the River Lys, and made a hash of everything, about ,50 worth of tools were lost also.

October 23rd 1918

Stood by in the morning and in the afternoon advanced and went to a billet 3 kilos east of Courtrai.

October 24th 1918

I was set to work to repair of German Field Kitchen, which we had captured and had been partly destroyed by revolver bullets being fired into it.

October 25th to 29th 1918

Resting, and during this time I paid 3 visits to Courtrai and in each case the town was bombed.

October 30th 1918

We moved back to Courtrai from our rest billets. I was detailed off as runner and sent with some dispatches to the CRE (Chief Royal Engineers) at Divisional Headquarters and had to pass through the villages of Sweveghem and La-cole, to get there a distance of 12 kilos in front of Courtrai, I did it on bicycle.

October 31st 1918

Worked on raft at billets till 8pm.

November 1st 1918

We left our billets at 8pm and two Sappers were detailed off to each General Service Wagon, which were ten in number, each wagon had four rafts on, five wagons broke under the weight, and still going on with the other five; two overturned when a shell bursting close by sent the donkeys amok, got there with the remaining three, and coming away a shell dropped right in one wagon, killing two drivers, and wounding one, four sappers killed and two wounded, and five horses out of six badly hit, two we shot on the spot. It was 10a.m when we got back, we had been to the River Scheldt.

November 2nd 1918

I fell sick, but had to march to Lieghem 14 kilos in front of Courtrai, in pouring rain, was wet through, and felt ill.

November 3rd 1918

Feel bad, and have gone sick again, the village is being very heavily shelled, four men killed last night, the poor civilians in this village are starving and living in cellars for safety, but many have been killed, and dead bodies of men and women and children; German soldiers and British soldiers lie about the streets.

November 4th 1918

Left the billets at Lieghem and marched to Ingoyghem four kilos away, felt far from well, but was on parade and didn't go sick.

November 5th 1918

Felt very ill, and went sick and was sent to 138th Field Ambulance, with a temperature of 101.5, the Field Ambulance is in Ooteghem, in the afternoon was conveyed as a stretcher case in a R.A.M.C car to the 3rd Australian Casualty Clearing Station in Courtrai, and stayed the night.

November 6th 1918

Feel worse, and my temperature has risen to 103.2, and my complaint is called the AFlue⁵ which is raging over the whole of Europe, in the afternoon I was put on the 13th Ambulance Train and conveyed via Ypres, Poperinghe and Hazebrouck to Boulogne, placed on a car and taken to the 54th General Hospital

⁵See newspaper cutting from The Times November 17 1999

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at Wimereux, arriving here at 6a.m, the train stopped, many times on the way to hand out men who had died on the journey.

November 7th 1918

Feel no better and have slight Broncho Pneumonia.

November 8th, 9th & 10th 1918

Feel very ill, and rumour is strongly afloat that the war is ending.

November 11th 1918

We had news in hospital that the enemy had pleaded for an armistice and that terms had been handed to him, which he accepted as armistice terms, and he is thoroughly beaten, it is a day of rejoicing and everybody seems happy and glad, bands are playing outside and guns firing salutes, but I feel too ill to take much interest in it.

November 12th 13th 14th 15th & 16th 1918

Still ill in bed but on the improve.

November 17th 1918

Got up for a couple of hours after tea.

November 18th 1918

Got up after dinner.

November 19th 20th & 21st 1918

Up all day, it seems hardly true that the war is over.

November 22nd 1918

I was marked fit for Convalescent Camp.

November 23rd 1918

I was sent to No12 Convalescent Camp at Wimereux.

November 24th 1918

Left the Convalescent Camp and marched through Wimereux to Hullington Base Details Camp, and had walk round Boulogne at night.

November 25th 1918

Left the Base Details and marched to Boulogne station, here we met many men who had just been released as prisoners of war from Germany, we entrained and

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arrived at Rouen at midnight, nowhere to sleep, so we got down on the roads and fell asleep.

November 26th 1918

Marched up to the Royal Engineers Base Depot, and placed in the casualty lines, under canvas.

November 27th 1918

Drew full equipment, left the Casual Lines, and posted to the strength of No5 Company.

November 28th 1918

Went through gas again, for practice.

November 29th 30th 1918

Was working all day at the Royal Engineers Training School.

December 1st 1918

Went on church parade, the first one since when on rest last June, in the afternoon had a walk down to Rouen, and at night was placed under orders.

December 2nd 1918

Was warned off for my old company the 228th Field Company, Royal Engineers.

December 3rd 1918

Stood by all day awaiting orders also on the 4th 5th and 6th inst.

December 7th 1918

Was paraded for proceeding up the line, and then the draft was cancelled.

December 8th 1918

Was paraded for a draft again, and it was cancelled again at the last minute.

December 9th 1918

We paraded and had dinner at 10a.m and marched off on draft at 1-30p.m, and entrained at Rouen station at 4p.m and left was glad to get away from Rouen.

December 10th 1918

Passed through Doullens at 9a.m then through St Pol and Bethune, crossed the old battle trenches at Givenchy and La Bassee and passed through Lille to Tournai.

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December 11th 1918

Left Tournai at 7a.m and entrained and went back to Lille, detrained and marched through Arras Gate across the city of Lille through the Gate of St Andre, entrained at St Andre station passed through Roubaix, Tourcoing, Menen and reached Courtrai about midnight.

December 12th 1918

Stopped at Courtrai, billeted in the Museum, this being the 41st Divisional Reception Camp.

December 13th to 24th 1918

Still in Courtrai, and it's rotten as we are not allowed to receive any correspondence whatever.

December 25th 1918

Christmas Day, absolutely fed up, it's the worst Christmas I've ever had.

December 26th to 31st 1918

Still in Courtrai, we have caused many disturbances in the town.

January 1st 1919

First day of the New Year.

January 2nd 1919

Still in rotten Courtrai.

January 3rd 1919

We left Courtrai and entrained and passed through Menin, Tourcoing, and Roubaix to Lille, through Lille, Tournai, Mons, Ath, Nivelles, Namur, to Huy, and then marched to a village called Moha about 5 kilos outside Huy, and I was posted to the strength of No2 Section 228th Field Company, Royal Engineers, this took up the whole of the day January the 4th 1919.

January 5th 1919

We did a few fatigues.

January 6th 1919

We did a few fatigues.

January 7th 1919

I mounted guard at 9a.m was relieved in the afternoon and went and played

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football for the company against the R.A.M.C we won 7-1.

January 8th 1919

Dismounted guard at 8a.m.

January 9th 1919

We marched from Moha through Wanza to Huy station, entrained passed through Liege to the frontier, crossed the frontier and stopped at the first big German station called Aix-la-Chapelle, then passed through Duren and stopped at Wahn at 5a.m

January 10th 1919

Detrained at Wahn at 5a.m and marched to a village about 10kilos away, here the people shut doors and windows in our faces, tried to be as unfriendly as they could, but it made no difference we were top dogs, we left this village after a three hours stop, and marched on to Cologne and billeted in a theatre, the civilians here were on the whole not too bad, but we held them in cold contempt, as we are the victors and they the victims.

January 11th 1919

We are in Kalk a part of Cologne, have been round the city this day, and I find it a most magnificent place.

January 15th 1919

I took part in the Divisional Boxing contest for Divisional championship for middleweight, won the first two bouts, but I got knocked out by Sgt Rundell of the Kings Royal Rifles in the semi-final.

January 19th 1919

I filled in my Dispersal Form for Demobilisation, but I am still in Kalk Cologne.

January 20th to 28th 1919

Still in Cologne.

January 29th 1919

We marched from Cologne through Rosrath, and Overath, to Honrath, a distance of 25 kilos this being the bridge head after which there were no British troops, our outposts are doing outpost duty here on the edge of the village and the German outposts were doing outpost duty 400 yds beyond.

January 30th 1919

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I took a day off.

January 31st 1919

I did a 24 hours guard for being off parade the day before.

February 1st 1919

I filled in my Demobilisation Card and I was warned to proceed the next day.

February 2nd 1919

Homeward bound, boarded the train at Honrath, passed through Rosrath, to Cologne, and stayed in the Weidenbach Barracks the night.

February 3rd 1919

Left Cologne at 9a.m and passed through Duren, Aix-le-Chapelle, Leige, Huy and Namur today.

February 4th 1919

Still in the train passed through Nivelles, Charleroi, Mons, Ath, to Tournai.

February 5th 1919

Still in the train and passed through Lille, Hazebrouk, to Dunkirk, arriving here at 11a.m and placed in what is called the Dirty Camp. We had dinner and paraded full marching order, supposed to have a bath, and proceeded to No1 Demobilisation Camp, in Dunkirk town, to await embarkation.

February 6th 1919

Still in the camp and placed in Demobilisation Drafts, I was placed in draft 61.

February 7th 1919

Left this Demobilisation Camp which is called Mardyke Camp, at Dunkirk at 9-30 a.m marched down to the docks, boarded the transport ship Viper at 2p.m, sailed 2-30p.m, had a rough crossing, and arrived at Dover at 6-0p.m, boarded the train at 6-30p.m and came to Prees Heath Camp arriving here at 3a.m.

February 8th 1919

Arrived at Prees Heath at 3a.m and handed in kit and rifle at 5a.m, got all my papers by 6a.m, had breakfast and boarded the train at 11a.m for Crewe, waited for a train at Crewe, got to Northwich at 6p.m, home at last.

February 9th 1919

Months leave started today.

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February 10th 1919

Put on my civilian clothes.

February 24th 1919

Started work at Brunner Mond and Co.s Winnington.

March 9th 1919

Months furlough expires today.

June 28th 1919

Peace was signed at Versailles (France) at 3-12p.m.

