

1916 Egypt

MAY

Mon 1 (333-27). Told off with Bom. Smithells & Mentiplay to go to Pt. Said for prisoners. Had a good time 12.30 to 6.30 p.m. Town & b' water. Back about 10.30 p.m.

Tue 2 (334-28). B Section NCOs on Guns. All gunners on after b' fast. Did a bit of gun-laying.

Wed 3 (335-29). Limber gunner. Half day off. Vaccinated.

Thu 4 (336-30). Clean Guns. Lecture on fuses & shells. General inspected gunners.

Fri 5 (337-31). Clean Guns. Howitzers firing at targets. 4.5". Lecture in afternoon. OCs went out to trenches.

Sat 6 (338-32). Clean Guns, etc.

Sun 7 (339-33). Went to Canal & h'qrs of Aust Engrs to see about survey job. Dinner & tea of fruit & biscuits. Two swims. Went on donkeys. Back in train. Saw OC about Engrs & limber gunners job. Expect another job here.

Mon 8 (340-34)). Clean wheels of "pill-boxes".

Tue 9 (341-35). Put wheels back on pill-boxes & got ready for fumigator at 2.15p.m. Struck tents & rolled up gear in blankets. Marched to station in hats, g. wats & boots. Gear put in two iron-covered trucks & a(?)....low turned steam into trucks for about 1 hour. A lot of our gear got slightly messed up. Leather on riding breeches especially. Did a bit of Morse.

Wed 10 (342-36). Indirect laying with deal sight. Standing off in afternoon. Reg B went to DADOS check stores.

Thu 11 (343-37). Thick fog till about 7 a.m. Told by OC to dismantle buffer for 47th Batt. But couldn't get gear so watched 45th gun being tested & oiled for firing tomorrow. Gun taken over about 5 p.m.

Fri 12 (344-38). Officers used Gun & got covered in mineral jelly. Fitters put too much grease in buffer. Cleaning Gun all day. Had a look at director. OC spoke to me about it. 7 acting Bombardiers appointed. Bush back.

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Sat 13 (345-39). OC to Cairo. Watching fitters on gun & cleaning same.

Sun 14 (346-40). Guns. Had two lays with dial sight. & putting aiming posts for lines of fire. Spent day looking up trig.

Mon 15 (347-41). Mr McCoy, OC, gave me some instruction with director. In signalling class in afternoon. Finish of limber gunner's job. Temp. About 111°F.

Tue 16 (348-42). 46th Batt. firing. I set up director & my angles were checked by Mr Fleming. Mr Grey's open lay shots were good. Firing from 10 to 11 a.m. & then knocked off because light was bad for observing. On buzzer sigs.

Wed 17 (349-43). Finish of 46th firing & 47th went on about 6.15 a.m. Key's shooting very good. Fall in Engrs' fatigue 8 a.m. Sorted out a bit of timber. Back about 11 a.m. Finish of work for day.

Thu 18 (350-44)). Signalling. Director with OC in afternoon. It has been very hot during the last week & water has been short.

Fri 19 (351-45)). Signalling & dir. Leather on trousers for 8 Piastres.

Sat 20 (352-46). Ditto. Buzzer.

Sun 21 (353-47). Stables. Had a ride to Sweetwater Canal. Trotting horse back. On director in morning.

Mon 22 (354-48). Battery practice. At obs station with OC. Signalling lecture. Reg to Cairo. Wrote home. Bob.

Tue 23 (355-49). Battery firing over near Rlwy. With OC. No plotter. Shooting good. Books from Reg from Cairo. Signalling.

Wed 24 (356-50). Battery practice. No director. ½ h.day. Dig gun-pits 7.30 p.m. to 1.15 a.m. ½ hr reliefs.

Thu 25 (357-51). Battery firing. (OC shooting) 7 to 9 a.m. Reg to Cairo (?). Good work).

Fri 26 (358-52). Signalling. Lecture on phone.

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Sat 27 (359-53). Mr Fleming shooting first thing. Good work but other batteries messed things up. (---- ?---- Ins on parade ground). Gun drill by gunners, ----?--- signalling. (Putties). Packing up & preparing to move for several days.

Sun 28 (360-54). Church parade. I had to go for horses from Howitzer Battery so missed march-past. Return horses after tea.

Mon 29 (361-55). Hand in all but one blanket. QM's fatigue & cleaning up brigade park. Big parade & march –past. Missed it as we had been on fatigue. Very hot day & the crowd had to march about 3 mls past the Suez Canal. Told off with Pat Keys, Naughton & Ryan to go to Cairo by 7.30 p.m. train & bring back prisoner.

Tue 30 (362-56). Arr. Cairo about 12.15 a.m. Garry to Anzac Hostel. 2/- bed. Up about 5.30 a.m. Good b'fast 1/-. Drove round bazaar, Sultan's palace. Had a brush-up & made a few purchases. Met Mr Keys about 9.15 a.m. & he told us to clear out & report at about 10.45 a.m. I went to Museum & Kas-el-Nil bridge. Reported again & told to come back at 5.15 p.m. Went to city & then by tram to Citadel. Donkeys to tombs of (?) Mumeloabs & several mosques. Climbed tower of one very old ruined mosque. Cost about 2/-. Saw a lot of old Cairo during the trip. Had I. Coffee etc. At Groppi & a good dinner & w.melon at Samuel's. Reported & went for prisoner. Caught train about 6.30 p.m. In camp about 11 p.m.

Wed 31 (363-57). Fell in on parade 9 a.m. Signalling. ½ h.day.

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Thu 1 (364-58). Fell in as usual & then had kit inspection. Struck tents about 11 a.m. Struck S.M.'s tent & then went for ammunition. Rations. Fell in after tea & marched to station. First train left at 8.30 p.m. Told off for 3rd train & [H.M.A.T.] **S.S. Caledonia**. The other two trains go on the **Kingstonia**. Messed round on platform & went on train about midnight.

Voyage to France

Fri 2 (365-59). Train left at 12.20 a.m. Rather a rough ride in open trucks. Arrived at Alexandria about 8 a.m. Went aboard **Caledonia** after messing round. Moved out into bay about 5 p.m. Told off for gun (12 pnd Naval gun). Had a little instruction on same & slept on poop deck.

Sat 3 (366-60). Up about 5.45 a.m. Fall in on 4 to 8 with gun. Steamed

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out about 9 a.m.

Sun 4 (367-61). On gun. Church service. Dog watch every day: 12 to 2, 2 to 4 p.m., so we got 12 to 4 a.m. Plenty of shipping. Patrol boats, mine sweepers, etc. Passed (bet) Crete & Greece last night.

Mon 5 (368-62). As usual. In certain parts a patrol boat runs ahead until we meet another to take us on further. There were about 12 steamers visible at about 7.30 p.m., trawlers, tramps, etc. Was down engine room yesterday. It was very hot (110°Fah). 8 boilers, 48 fires (2 single & double enders). Trip Eao Twin screw, 170 Boiler press. 9,500 tons. 2 funnels. Painted black. 'Anchor Line'.

Tue 6 (369-63). Supposed to have passed in vicinity of submarine about 4 a.m. As usual. Report of naval engagement. 7 German destroyers sunk. Passed near Malta at dinner time.

Wed 7 (370-64). Kitchener & staff reported drowned. Sunk in **Hampshire** in North Sea, by a mine or torpedo. Salt bath. Had kitbags out for last time. Passed S. of Sardinia this afternoon.

FRANCE

Thu 8 (371-65). As usual. Sighted France about dinner time. Came into harbour & steamed in behind b' water, where we arrived about 5.30 p.m. Marseilles is very pretty from the harbour with plenty of trees & gardens: reminds me of Sydney Harbour (in places). Had an inspection in full marching order at 4 p.m.

Fri 9 (372-66). Shifted across from b' water to 'A' Dock. As usual all day. All sorts of rumours as to our destination. Saw some German prisoners. Fall-in on wharf at 6 p.m. & had a ----- of a march (about 2 miles) to Railway Station. Platforms almost level with rails. Covered in station. Dropped out with _____ & Gillespie. Arr. station about 8 p.m. Boarded Paris Express which left at 11.45 p.m. Comfortable 3rd Class carriage. 5 men in our car.

Missing day-number in original diary: (373-67)

Sat 10 (374-67). Very pretty scenery al the way. Through Rhone Valley) like parts of Tasmania. Soldiers everywhere. Two in our car. Stopped at

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Lyons & lost out seats to ladies. Left Lyons at about 2 p.m.. (Chicken). Arr. Dijon 10 p.m. Left 11.20 p.m. & then turned in. Pretty girls every station.

Sun 11 **(374-68)**. We had arrived at Laroche when I woke at 5 a.m. & we left at 7 a.m. after having a shave, wash & b'fast. Got out of Paris trainat Villenaux, a large station, 10.30 a.m. (as we are not going through Paris, but around it). Another train backed into same platform & it took us to stn. yards of a large rlwy. centre near Paris, 3.30. (soup from Red + Depot). We seemed to come on a track which skirted Paris, merely running through suburbs, which are very pretty. Saw Eiffel Tower & city in the distance. (Suburban trains have double-decker cars. Our carriages were dog-boxes.) Here we saw a lot of French soldiers. Caught another train which took us to Achers & we got out at 7.30 p.m. Missed Le Havre train & had to wait on station which was rather cold. At 11 p.m. we marched along to next platform & got into another train. Talking to a French soldier till about 1.30 a.m.

Mon 12 (375-69). Just after I awoke at 5 a.m., we arrived at Rouen. It was rather cool. From here on to Le Havre, the villages are very pretty. Arrived at Le Havre at 8.30. Messed about on platform for about 1 hr & then had a ----- of a 2½ ml. march to Artillery camp. Tents with wooden floors. This finishes my most interesting train-trip from S. to N. of France. You could not help noticing the effect of war. The majority of the people were in mourning & most of the men were in uniform of some sort. Slept for a few hours after dinner & then went on town picket from 6 to 9 p.m.

Tue 13 (376-70). Rev. 7 a.m. Fall in 7.30 a.m. B'fast & then Route March from 9 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. all around Havre. Went to A.S.C. for rations after dinner. Came back & got put on horse picket. Rotten job. 3 men & NCO. 4 on 8 off, 6 to 10 a.m. Rained nearly all the time. Bad horse lines & rugs.

Wed 14 (377-71). Horse P. 6 to 10 a.m. Off rest of day. Went for a stroll through lines & picked up a drunk.. Clocks put on.

Thu 15 (378-72). Marched down to Ordinance with 10 others QMS for all our shortages of gear. Fine system. Large sheds like Y.R. shipping sheds with everything required for an army. Marched out with party for dinner. Motor lorry went back with remainder of gear after teams & (----- *obscure text* -----) B & J came back through town by tram. Shifting tomorrow at 6 p.m.

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Fri 16 (379-73). Up 6.30 a.m. Cleaning & putting gear on guns all day. ½ hour dinner. R back to Ordinance for 2 weeks. Finish guns about 4 p.m. Left camp about 5.30 p.m. Arrived at station about 6.30 p.m. Left at 9 p.m. Truck with 12 men. Not bad travelling.

Sat 17 (380-74). Boulogne, 11 a.m. Calais, 3.30 p.m. St Omer, 5 p.m. Cassel, 6.30 p.m. Disentrained & moved off at 7.45 p.m. to billet in a big barn near a village called Borre. (H' qrs is at Caestre) near Haisebrook [sic]. Riding on gun carriage from camp to Havre Stn, also from Cassel to billet. Rather rough ride. Arrived at farm about 9.30 p.m. Tied up horse to lines on guns & turned in, in a shed.

Sun 18 (381-75). Up about 7 a.m. Straighten up horse line. Up to village for bread. Back about dinner time & straightened up instruments.

Mon 19 (382-76). Up about 6 a.m. Told to be ready at 8.30 a.m. to go for march past in full kit. ----- (*obscure text*) ----- I had a good ride with director. Back about 11 p.m. Clean instruments. (Marie).

Tue 20 (383-77). Stables mostly. Mat Cafe.

Wed 21 (384-78). Up as usual 6 a.m. Stables. Leave to England read out. Told off to go to firing line with party of 25. Champagne & No farewell.

In action on the Western Front.

Thu 22 (385-79). Up at 4 a.m. Had a rotten job getting gear together. Had a grand ride through towns & country. Left at 5.30 a.m. Passed through Baillieu, Nieppe, where we crossed a bridge. Arrived at Armentières at 9.45 a.m. & handed over our Leave passes to drivers going back & then marched in 6s for about 1½ ml to billet in an old farm house, L'Armée . Very pretty. Close to shell-fire. Hardly a sound window in the city. Watching aeroplanes being fired at. Big shells (5.9" I think) close to our joint nearly all day. Bits from anti-a.c. & H.E. dropping on roof. (With Barlow). The gunners have been put in the gun-pits to take the place of the men sent out from the 20th Battery. This is how we will take over the positions. Heavy bombardment from our battery & those near us followed by a raid by the infantry. The raiders passed here about 9.30 a.m. They seem a "happy, don't care" crowd & carried some queer looking weapons. They volunteer for the job. After bombardment, a gas alarm was rung & we turned out in gas helmets, but the gas didn't come our way. Saw Tubby Lee, ----- (*obscure text*) ----- & several NBT chaps.

Fri 23 (386-80). With director man (Bomb. Barlow) all day. Huns bombarding all day. Old Frenchman killed (civilian). In Signals telephone dug-out from 6 to 10 p.m. Our battery bomb at 12 m.n.

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Sat 24 (387-81). Up at about 9 a.m. On 1 to 6 p.m. A few shells over also a bit of bombing by us. 3 women & 1 man killed.

Sun 25 (388-82). On 7 a.m. Got some leave to go to Erquingham 4.30 to 6.30 p.m. & saw Bob [Snape] in billet near church about 3 miles from here. Seemed well etc. Shells nearby after dinner. Harrison (NBT) of 47th Bty killed by an aircraft shell. On phone 10 p.m. to 7-ish shift. Stunt & raid on. We fired about 100 & I & others had to go & carry ammunition.

Mon 26 (389-83). On phone on my own 3 to 7 a.m. & good meals today. On 6 to 10 p.m. Our planes (2) brought down German balloons at 8.45 p.m. I believe this is the third in the last day or so. Germans opened about 9.30 with batteries & we replied, we fired over 600 rounds & the whole battery was out carrying ammunition.

Tue 27 (390-84). Up at about 9.40 a.m. Bob came over on bike. 15 more of our bty arrived & brought telephone gear. Raining on & off all day. Went to old battery to put in A.P. pegs. Had a feed of strawberries. Down to D.57 Art. headquarters in trenches 5 p.m. On 8 to 12 m.n. Strolled into frontline trenches with an infantry chap who looked after the carrier pigeons. Mail.

Wed 28 (391-85) Very quiet all night. Had b'fast brought down. On at 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but had to stay till 6.15 p.m. instructing new fellows. Our batteries going on both sides of us for 2 hours.

Thu 29 (392-86). Up at 9.45 a.m. Inst on director work with Barlow. Making switch-board with Bob Danilly. Big straffe on at night.

Fri 30 (393-87). Up at 9.45 a.m. Went up to town to get switches to fit phone. Back about 3 p.m. Board finished all the hut fittings. A little firing. 17 planes passed over. A fine sight.

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Sat 1 (394-88). Up at 8 a.m. Shells, some very close. Finished board. Fritz hit tower in Armentières this morn. Bombardment both sides.

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Sun 2 (395-89). Put terminals in board. Shells all round our billets. Took snaps of our billets. Out by bomb'g a bit. Told we are moving tomorrow.

Mon 3 (396-90) Standing by all day. (Had champagne). Some more gunners came up but we were sent back. Letter from home. New Zealanders taking over. Left about 8.30 p.m. Seymour & Gillespie slightly elevated. Got left behind. Called in later for a drink. Called in at 2 batteries in Fleur Baix but didn't find our crowd until I inquired at HQ. Just before this we were sitting behind a hedge & nearly got knocked over by 15 to 20 Fritz shells. Battery too far as it was 12 m.n. we decided to sleep in farm & go on in the morning. Fleurbaix had two life-size crucifixes & a large church.

Tue 4 (397-91) Up at daylight about 3,30 a.m. & walked to 2 Brigade Headquarters, about 2 miles. Couldn't find 46th (They were taking over 8th Batt'y 2nd Div.) Found them at last at 7.30 a.m. Worst 12 hours I have spent for some time. Shells pretty hot. (Bush arrived). Put phone in. Worked alright. Telephones.

Wed 5 (398-92). On phone. Forward Observation Officer. A little dug-out affair about 300 yds behind firing lines. On phone from 8 p.m. & all night. Lt. Fleming & Mountiplay. Gas alert mess-up. Machine-gun bullets whistling overhead --- them & us.

Thu 6 (399-93). Finished up a quiet night at 8 p.m. Back to billet & phone. Pugh & I on phone 10 to 12 p.m. Gas alert again but nothing came of it. Stunt on.

Fri 7 (400-94). Lay phone line from Obs Post to A3. 1.30 p.m. Finished at 6.30 p.m. B of a job. Messing round all day in the rain, mud & potato crops.

Sat 8 (401-95). On phone. Down to O.P. with rations in afternoon & in for a rotten job of repairing line to O.P. tree under shell-fire. Got back & had to return straight away with O.C. Line alright but plug out of switch-board.

Sun 9 (402-96). On phone all day. Battery shelled. All men out but little damage done except to the billet. (Battery is about 500 yds from our billets so we were clear of it). Two shells dropped short into our trenches from our battery.

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Mon 10 (403-97). On 12 to 3 a.m. Had to rouse up clerk for amm. report. Portion of relieving battery arrived (58th Bty, 5th Div.)

Tue 11 (404-98). On phone. Went for a stroll to Battery. Had a bath & change at Div. Baths. (?) Bat. St. Mair stunt because an Inf. Officer did his block ---- action was ordered & our btys wasted shells.

Wed 12 (405-99). As usual. New bty here took over at 8 p.m. 3 telephs had to staff on all night. Very quiet. Men of battery went to wagon lines.

Thu 13 (406-100). Up at 8 a.m. Went to wagon lines, where we joined rest of battery who were all ready to move off. Left W.L. about 11 a.m., passed thro Bac St. Abban (?) about 12.30 p.m. Passed F. Johnson, Robinson, Henry, Richardson on road with 5th Div. Art. Roads full of moving artillery. Had to sleep at barn about 1/2 ml from wagons. Stroll thro town. Fine church. Grotto with Virgin Mary. Slept in bed of peas (?) finest (?) I have had.

Fri 14 (407-101). Slept in & missed first parade at barns. W. Lines 8 a.m. Packed up & moved off about 10.30 a.m. Thro Steenwerke to another lot of billets. Sorting tele gear & then given horses (Mine No. 838). Turned in early in old wagon in the barn in Steenwerke.

Sat 15 (408-102). Up at 6.30 a.m. to load wagons with ammunition. Parade shrapnel helmets. Move to dump a lot of gear -----(?)----- about moving into -----(?)-----right away. Aid & a bit of drafting for O.C. Saddled up & put director, plane table on ----- (?)----- a lift with O.C. & galloper at about 7 p.m. Rode thro Saily to a farm-house. Left horses & marked positions for battery. Guns & amm. arrived about 9.30 p.m. Gas alert. Chance of our gas coming back on us. Could see it about 1 mile away.

Sun 16 (409-103). Turned in about 2.30 a.m. as I couldn't see much to do with guns. At about 5 a.m. gunners knocked off. Lay down for a while. & then went with O.C. to lay out lines of fire. Battery in action about 10 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. Shot off 199 rounds. Digging telephone-pits. Fritz sent some shells over our position on & off all afternoon. Digging ammunition-pit. A lot of ammunition came in & we worked all night nearly. Tommie officer killed.

Mon 17 (410-104). Dug pit for officer. Gas alert in morning. Stunt supposed to be 1 round per gun per minute from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. & then stunt put off for 24 hours (on acc. Of amm.). Men resting. Bush & I went for a walk

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to O.P. Wounded being brought up all the time as Fritz keeps shelling on the trenches. About 1,000 rounds of amm. came in. 3 or 4 gas alerts in ¼ hour after tea & guns fired 20 or 30 rds. Turned in about 12.30 a.m.

Tue 18 (211-105). Up about 8 a.m. Made a small commutator. No 5 (setting fuzes) on No. 1 Gun for a while in afternoon. Very fine day & about 6 p.m. Fritz had a couple of planes & balloons up ---- first for some time as the weather has been dull & drizzly. Firing stopped & we had to keep still for some time. Tea about 8 p.m. & then started making gun-pits. Beautiful moonlight night.

Wed 19 (412-106). Worked all night. Finished about 4 a.m. too late to bring amm. To stunt so we turned in. Up about 10 a.m. Porridge & bacon for b'fast. No. 4 (loading gun.) On No. 1 Gun for a while & then went to O.P. Back to Battery with despatch & then back with rations. On phone in action. Heaviest bombardment to date. Fritz replying. Long stream of infantry going into trenches. Bombardment started at 1 p.m. Saw a few of the infantry go over about 3 p.m. Fritz then dropped his fire into No Man's Land & then on his own trenches & then his second line trenches. Went down the road with Mr Fleming to pick new gun position. Stray bullets whizzing round (Flem. scared). Wounded all along the road. Infantry told me that 2nd line had been taken but we could not leave it as there were no reinforcements, ammunition.. Saw about 20 wounded Huns. Went to battery for blankets about 11 p.m. Bed about 1 a.m.

Thu 20 (413-107). Up at 4a.m. to go on phone & start action. Gun going nearly all night. Yesterday's affair seems a mess-up. No-one seems to know anything & we are firing on the old wire, cutting lines all day. (-----?-----
----- our chaps were -----(?)----- put in counter-attack).
Wounded still going down the road. Very quiet this afternoon.

Fri 21 (414-108). On A3 phone from 12 to 2 a.m. Up at 10 a.m. Best rest time since arriving here. Quiet all day. Fleming down in morning. Hays for dinner & went to battery for pay, 40 Francs. Back to bed about 11 p.m. Shells close to O.P. & us on road.

Sat 22 (415-109). Up at 10.30 a.m. Rather quiet all day. Up to Battery after tea. Back to O.P. & had to roll up wire to O.P. but.....had been broken up during strafe..... that we had to leave most of it. Back to O.P. about 11 p.m. Watching light. Packed up & came back to Battery. Moved (?) off to wagon lines about 3 a.m. (Sun.) on a bike.