

**JAN France
1917**

[The entries for Mon 8 to Thu 11 are a little mixed up in the original, but the following is the best sense of Harold's chronology:-

Mon 8 (585-42). Up about 9 a.m. To O.P. Mr McDonald & Mc C. Fairly clear. O.C. vols for action in afternoon. Fire all night. Dard took shift.

Tue 9 (586-43). On phone till about 7.30 a.m. Rel. About 10.30 a.m. Came back in a snow-storm via Group & arr. at Bty. at 11 a.m

Wed 10 (587-44). To Liaison with McMahan & Pugh to relieve our telephone. But Dard stayed on. Few shells about.

Thu 11 (588-45). McC, Brown & Sey went with Dard to Liaison & I went to Bty about 10 a.m. after being on phone from 3.30 a.m.

Fri 12 (589-46). As usual. Action etc. O.C. crook last day or so Snowing on & off in last couple of days. (8 to 10.30 p.m. shift).

Sat 13 (590-47). Up about 10.30 a.m. runner for the day. Brown & McC to school after returning from O.P. Went to O.P. with McM in pitch dark with despatch. Walked in shell-holes & nearly into A subs gun firing. (Gunson back).

Sun 14 (591-48). As usual. Phone 6 to 8 a.m. Sey, Pugh & McM to L.D. (?) I went nearby there to take candles & mail. Runner. Got O.C. to have despatch ready by 5 p.m. & so it was not quite so dark as last night.

Mon 15 (592-49). Phone 12 to 4 a.m. O.P. with Gunson. Cold day. Have to keep watch in lookout all night now. 2 on 4 off. Subs gun pulled out & sub gun took over Tank gun 600 yds behind line --- used for tanks or massed infantry attack, (open sights).

Tue 16 (593-50). Back to Bty about 9.40 a.m. As usual. Rolling in old wire. Cold day.

Wed 17 (594-51). Snowed half the night. Everything white. Shell-holes full of snow. Phone 6 to 11 a.m. Snow falling half the day. Officers & all in.

Thu 18 (595-52). Phone 2 to 4. Up about 10 a.m. & went to Tank gun with Corp. Walker & Seymour to lay phone line from there to F.L.T. line. (Very cold job out in the snow.) Met O.C. & crowd just as we completed the job. Back about 2.30 p.m. Messing round. Phone 10.30 to 1.

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Fri 19 (596-53). Runner for the day. Night gun not too good in the snow.

Sat 20 (597-54). Up at 10 a.m. On phone half the day. As usual Wrote a couple of letters.

Sun 21 (598-55). Rumour of moving to Flers to 38th Bty.

Mon 22 (599-56). Packed up. Part of crowd went in morning, others after dinner. Gear on tramway. Few shells.

Tue 23 (600-57). In Hun dugout under an old building. Phone 12 to 2 a.m. but Pugh tossed to see who would do both & he lost. Beautiful day. To L.D. Gunson & Day. Rumour about going back to old position.

Wed 24 (601-58). On phone from 12.30 to 4 a.m. Gunson got b'fast at Flers position. Day & I went up about 2 p.m. but everyone had gone, so we went to old position & dew rations. Fritz sent over some big shells between us & rly. Stirred things up some. (Beautiful day. Therm 16° Fah.) Still at LKiaison. Phone 9.30 to 1 a.m. Went to Q. Pugh & Day about 5 p.m. Back along duckboards. Very slippery. Coots fall all the time. 14 Batt. coming in.

Thu 25 (602-59). No relief. Beautiful day. (Ther. 11° Fah.) Shells all day. Killed 3 & wounded 8. Shells near 47th also 3 men wounded. To Q.P. & Bty for rations. Guns sent away to 45th & 47th Btys tonight. Our positions evacuated. Back to L.O. about 5.30 p.m. Met Martin Rollins, 14th Batt., Treyvand's cousin.

Fri 26 (603-60). Ther. 12° [Fah.] Still at L.D. About 10 a.m., McMahan told me I was going to "Blighty". Mr Keys let me go & I arr. at Bty. about 12.15 p.m. Shaved. Packed up. Went to Q.S. (12th Bde) for pass. Then to W.L. Bath & change. Tried to find 2nd Div. Walked to Albert. Long way. Arr. about 7 p.m. Tea, soup, etc. Till 12 m.n. then boarded train Hosp. Cars, no seats, hold 50 men.

Sat 27 (604-61). Left 2 a.m. Cold. Tea & rations brought round several times.

Sun 28 (605-62). Arr. Le Havre 6.10 a.m. Long march to rest huts down near docks arr. there about 7.45 a.m. Met Bob in B.E.F. Canteen. Strolling round all day.

Mon 29 (606-63). Messing round. Warrants stamped. Fell in 7.30 p.m. Marched to boats. Slept below floor of cabin.

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Tue 30 (607-64). Arr. Sth Hampton about 8 a.m. Train for Waterloo LSWR arr. W'loo about 12.30 p.m. March to H'ferry Road. New trousers, hat, badges. Then, Comm. Bank. Drew £20. Then, to Cosmo Hotel. Then, to His Majesty's 'Chu Chin Show'. Home about 11.30 p.m.

Wed 31 (608-65). Trip round London 4/- . Very good. Met Tobin 47th Bty. in Strand. Changed (?) 2 goats (?) Went to 'Little Bit of Fluff' at Criterion, Shaftesbury Street. Supper & home about 12.30.

FEB

Thu 1 (609-66). Wrote letters . went to H'ferry Rd. re ticket to Cardiff, Wales. Played billiards. Tea then went to 'High Jinks', Adelphi. Supper. Home 12 m.n.

Fri 2 (610-67). Up about 10.30 a.m. & went by elec. Tram to epping Forest & back. (9.149-81) to dinner . To Petticoat Lane, (Essex St.) Aldergate. Then to Regent St, Oxford St, Bond St & Picture Show. After tea, to 'Three Cheers', Shaftesbury. Home 12.15 a.m.

Sat 3 (611-68). Up 7.30 a.m. £17-11- ----(?) on Tube to Paddington. Saw Pete C.K. Left for Cardiff 11.30 a.m. Good sup & train. Stop Newport only. Under Channel Severn Tunnel (5 mls?) Train to Pontypridd about 3 p.m. Arr. Gelliwastad Rd. safely. After tea, went for stroll to top of hills to see Rocking Stones & Druid Stones. Then round town to see Institute & Free Library with Miah & Florrie.

Sun 4 (612-69). Up about 10 a.m. Heavy snow during night. Went with Miah for a walk up mountain overlooking Rhonda Valley. After dinner, strolled round town & Gt. Western Colliery.

Mon 5 (613-70). Went to Caerphilly Castle. (Mr & Mrs Elias for dinner) then to Cardiff & Llandaff. Tea in C'diff & then to Mr & Mrs Morriss. Back to P'pridd & saw Mrs Porcher next to Astfurlong (with Florrie).

Tue 6 (614-71). Went to Aberamon: Mr & Mrs Durham's. Saw Aberamon Colliery Wks (where Father was). Then, Aberdare with Joe Durham, Williams & Archer. Back home about 7.30 p.m. (Florrie & Aunt Lizzie). Played billiards. F. & M. till midnight.

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Wed 7 (615-72). Strolled round town & church with Florrie. Was introduced to lady clerks from bank at dinner-time. Left for Barry about 2 p.m. Florrie came as far as Craigiare. Met Uncle R.[obert Snape] at station about 3 p.m. Went home to tea & then he took me for a stroll round the docks to Barry Is. Sand on beach partly frozen. 20 ft. tide & boats go in & out at low water in a lock. water refills harbor from a reservoir which is filled by tide. Back to supper. Turned in 10 p.m.

Thu 8 (616-73). Up around 9 a.m. All round Barry with Uncle R. Back to dinner & then caught train about 2 p.m. Change at Cardiff arr. at Paddington about 6.30 p.m. Tube to Holborn. Dinner at Cosmo.. Then to Aldwych Theatre ‘Cavaleria Rustic[ana]’ & ‘I Pagliacci’. Rob’t Parker good in the latter. Tenor not bad with Drinking song in former, also the tenor in the latter, singing ‘On with the Motley’. Turned in about 11.30 p.m. Room 316. (315 last time).

Fri 9 (617-74). Up about 9 a.m. sent parcels away & wrote letter. Bought watch, Ingersoll, Regent House, Kingsway, £1-1-0. Had lunch at Lyons near Trafalgar Sq. Tube to Bond St mistake. Strolled along Oxford st, then bus to juyst past Marble Arch. Then another back along Oxford St, Holborn Viaduct past old London homes, & London Monument, Bow Church, Old Bailey, across London Bge. London Bridge Stn. Got in taxi & went across Blackfriars Bge. along Embankment past..... Big Ben, West Abbey town, Victoria St. To H’ ferry Rd. Got gear & came back across West Bge. To Waterloo. Met Sgt. Alexander who started an argument with M.P.s & had a bottle of whisky broken on p’ form by one of them. Caught last train to Sth. Hampton 4 p.m. arr. about 7 p.m. Went straight aboard the ‘Connaught’. We were near the last & the boat was full but we got a bunk each in a good cabin by giving a guy ½ Crown. 4 others came in & slept in a bunk. They had 2 bottles of whisky. Rather rough trip., but kept my guts. Boat left about 9 p.m. 2 destroyer escort.

France

Sat 10 (618-75). Arr. Havre about 2 a.m. but did not go ashore till about 8 a.m. Hell of a long march to camp near old artillery camp that we had on first coming to France. Put in tents. Here are some new divisions about. Strolled round Canteen Y.M.C.A. Turned in 8 p.m. 12 in tent. Crowded, but warm.

Sun 11 (619-76). Up about 8.30 a.m. B’ fast & clean up camp. Strolled round. Turned in about 6 p.m. as there was nothing to do.

Mon 12 (620-77). Up about 6 a.m. Squaring blankets up, etc. Fell in about 9.30. Messing round for an hour or so & then marched thro’ Havre past rest camp. Had dinner. Wrote a couple of letters. Rations. Turned in.

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Tue 13 (621-78). Up at about 3.15 a.m. Fell in.. Marched to station. Train left siding s about 5 a.m. **TRAIN SMASH about 8.45 p.m. Ran into goods train. 45 carriages on our train which was travelling about 8 mls per hr. No brakes except on engine (I think). Hell of a bump every time it stopped. 28 killed including officer & 60 odd injured. 'Chocos' roused out from(?) obscure ext.....to assist with Putties, blankets & field bandages. Messing round till Midnight. Couple of trucks of goods train smashed. Engine of our train damaged a bit (buffer beams, etc.) 3 cars next it alright, but next 6 telescoped & some smashed to matchwood..... (?) obscure text.....** **Admired patience & courage of injured men. We fell in about midnight after most of the work was done & had a bugger of a march 3 or 4 mls to FORGES LES EAUX.**

Wed 14 (622-79). Arr. at latter place about 4.15 a.m. Messed about & were finally put in billets in theatre, school & Continental Hotel (hospital). Fine town. Walked around Thermal Establishment. Fine residences & Hotels, also Châteaux where Louis XIII & his wife used to stay, season June to September. Fell in 1.30 p.m. Messed round & (?) eventually marched to station Serqueux, 30 sides [rail sidings?] Messed round till 5.30 p.m. & then entrained for Albert. Passed thro' Amiens.

Thu 15 (623-80). Start of thaw. Got out at latter place about 2 or 3 a.m. Our (?) lot had to get back (R.T.O.I.S. orders). On way to Albert, they changed to front of train. Arriving at Albert about 5.30 a.m. Turned in in Y.M.C.A. hut for a couple of hours & then messed round trying to find unit. Got right directions at last & walked & rode (2 motor lorries) out on Amiens road to Pont Noyelles where we turned off to Frehencourt. Walked from main road. Missed town & went to Behencourt & got directed back to wagon Line. Decent joint. Battery in action for 4 days stunt behind old position. Big night for me. Dinner & cocoa with Bob Thomson. New bombs been made. Turned in about 9 p.m. Not so cold tonight. Beautiful day.

Fri 16 (624-81). Rev. 7 a.m. Fall in 7.30 a.m. Up to horse lines. Kuck out & feed ¾ hr. Back to b'fast. Fall in 9.30 a.m. Harness cleaning. Dinner 12.30 p.m. Told to assist cleaning up front of cookhouse. Tea about 5 p.m. McMahon back. Warned for Town picket.....(?)..... bungled..... indistinct text).

Sat 17 (625-82). Hut orderly. Stand off for day. On guard. Fall in about 5 p.m. Very funny brigade turn-out. Bell is the prisoner. Bit of a farce as I slept as usual but had to wake the cook & orderly shg (?)

Sun 18 (626-83). Guard. Men clinked for pinching wool/wood (?)

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Mon 19 (627-84). Up as usual. Soft job all day. Cleaning horses' shoes up for harness shed. Leave to Amiens supposed to start yesterday.

Tue 20 (628-85). Rather sloppy weather lately & horse lines are bad. Hut orderly.

Wed 21 (629-86). Cln'g horse lines & digging drain. Dirty job.

Thu 22 (630-87). There have been 2 funerals in town in last two days. Church bell ringing all the time. As usual. Nothing startling to report. Relieve hut ord. Went to Querrieu for hot shower. Goodo. On town picquet. Performed duties at home.

Fri 23 (631-88). As usual. Relieve hut orderly for bath. Nothing to do.

Sat 24 (632-89). As usual. Stables. Relieve guard 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Corp Walker back.

Sun 25 (633-90). As usual. Parade 11.30 a.m. 3.30 p.m. Rumour of advance. Called out about 11.45 to assist Q.M.S. as men were required for pits in morning. Rumour Lt. Fleming wounded & battery advanced. Messed round till after m'night & turned in again.

Mon 26 (634-91). Rev. 5 a.m. Fed horses. 6 F battery wagons went up S.M. Vet. Serg 2 or 3 Bomb.s & a few gunners. Town picquet. Killed time in estaminets.

Tue 27 (635-92). As usual. Cln'g teleph gear & bikes. Shift W. Lines up road after dinner. Letter from Wales.

Wed 28 (636-93). As usual. Dunlop down. Limbers in & near Flers. Bty at Factory Corner. 47 & 45 have also had casualties. Flags etc. Sent up. Cln'g gear all day. On guard at night.

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Thu 1 (637-94). On guard.

Fri 2 (638-95). Up as usual. Hut orderly. Sports. Bomb school & artillery. Heats of tug-of-war.

Sat 3 (639-96). As usual. Supposed to clean harness. Light frost. ½ holiday. Lost tug-of-war.

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Sun 4 (640-97). As usual. Holiday. After tea, walked thro' Montigny & Breher..... with Mc C & K.....

Mon 5 (641-98). Cold yesterday. Frosty. As usual. Harness cleaning. Guard 5.30 p.m.

Tue 6 (642-99). Guard all day. Wash & change.

Wed 7 (643-100). Rev. 5 a.m. Absent for first parade. Crowd moved out about 9.30 a.m. Up before Rabett re F.G.C.M. 12.30 p.m. Claude slightly sprung (?) Day drunk. B.H.C. supplied escort Bomb.s Reprimanded. I got 7 days No. 2 F.P. Claude very shick. Good dinner & tea. Bed about 10 p.m. Cold.

Thu 8 (644-101). Up at 9.30 a.m. Good b'fast steak & eggs, toast. Cold & windy last night. Light snow. Light snow this morning. Haircut. Went duck-shooting from little hut in swamp. G.S. wagon arrived after tea.

Fri 9 (645-102). Up about 8 a.m. Load wagon. Left 10.30 a.m. Walked & rode on G.S. thro' Behencourt to Fronvillers. Had coffee & biscuits. Motor to Albert Walked to W. Lines. Snowed nearly all the way. Bisc. & tea in Y.M.C.A. tent. Slept in hut.

Sat 10 (646-103). Rev. 6.30 a.m. Stables. B'fast. (?) Hale in 9.30 a.m. Hut orderly. Dug hole for cooks. Guard at night.

Sun 11 (647-104). Guard. Slept in d'outs all night. No posts. Prisoners supposed to go for F.G.C.M. but went to doctor only as stunt is on.

Mon 12 (648-105). Heavy rain about 3 a.m. Very muddy & sloppy. Bell & Whitaker up. Horse, 3rd Div. shot thro' neck with shrap. (1 killed). Sgt. 3rd Div. bruised. Clipping horses all day. Went to Canteen.

Tue 13 (649-106). As usual. Hut orderly. Kept out of way for the day. Baghdad fall confirmed.

Wed 14 (650-107). As usual. Horse-clipping . Move back again by Huns. Guns firing at 5800 (Butte de Warlencourt).

Thu 15 (651-108). As usual. Hut orderly. Showery yesterday. Cold wind today. On guard (?) Went thro' Mametz Wood to Singer's Circus to see Bob.

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Fri 16 (652-109). Guard. To see Bob after tea with McMahan. Teams out to move guns 1½ mls.

Sat 17 (653-110). Beautiful day. Horses & wagons carting amm. & I went up with bike. Heavy going. Came back on horse. Via Butte de Warlencourt to Dead Mule Corner. Guns out of range again. Bapaume evacuated & on fire., also other villages. (Rev. to be 1 a.m. tomorrow.. Cancelled & fell in at 1 p.m. I went up with B Section team (Centre). Got bogged but got outeventually & moved up to outskirts of Bapaume. 2 of our planes brought down.

Sun 18 (654-111). Finished up about 3 a.m. & turned in at old position for a couple of hours. Strolling round all morning & built a small d'out with McMahan after dinner> Turned out about 9 p.m. to pull a G.S. wagon out. Turned in about 2 a.m. after getting blankets, etc. Had a few rums. No rations till 3 p.m. (soup, barley).

Mon 19 (655-112). Up about 7 a.m. Stables, etc. More of crowd came up. (I was supposed to stand by with Gun team all the time till the owner of the horses turned up). Built new d'out for 3 (Pugh, Mc & I). Turned in about 9 p.m. Rain slightly.

Tue 20 (656-113). Sleet & snow at stables. Pugh & I on water fatigue. Strolled round & found a tarpaulin. Made a good dugout. Turned in 9 p.m.

Wed 21 (657-114). Up as usual, 6.30. Cold breeze still blowing. Water & strolling round.

Thu 22 (658-115). As usual. Put up tents. Pugh & I took bikes to pits. Strolled round Bapaume..... Wirth & Johns. Back to tea. Mob bombing last night (?) Arthur Spooner injured.

Fri 23 (659-116). As usual. Took message to O.C. Frosty morning. Rotten road for bikes. Someone pinched our W.L. wire. Salving wire. Job on phone with Pugh, (?) Snow. Parcel from Florrie.

Sat 24 (660-117). Phone. Wire gone again. Bob came while I was out on line. Went up to Bapaume to see him (next to our Spooks in a Hun dugout (3 flights of steps). Report of moving guns again. Plane dropped 3 bombs & a few shells came.

Sun 25 (661-118). Up about 7.30 a.m. E sub gun. Went to register at 7.30 a.m. All the W.L. but sick horses & spare drivers went to new wagon line beyond

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Bapaume. Guns in action 2 mls further on. Went to village for water. Big Hun cemetery. Made dugout with tarpaulin. Drivers out with amm. McMout to go up 4 a.m. (Clock on 1 hour last night).

Mon 26 (662-119). Up about 7.30 a.m. Salving wire. Stunt 5 a.m. this morning. Village taken. Casualties light. Saw 30 Hun prisoners loading amm. wagons for Hun counter attack. Showery & cold day. Light sleet at 5 p.m. Turned in 10 p.m. Pinched wire. **Town Hall Bapaume blown up.**

Tue 27 (663-120). Up 8 a.m. Loading ammunition. Out for wire. Went thro' village & across country to Bapaume. Saw church & blown-up town hall. 3 storey bldg blown to a few heaps of bricks. Town Mayor & Comforts Fund joints buried in it. Went & saw Bob. He said a prisoner told them that an elect. Clock set for any number of days had set it off & that any good bldgs or dugouts were being treated in the same way. Back to dinner. Out on wire. Pugh's brother with 14 Batt. here. Bob goes out tomorrow.

Wed 28 (664-121). Bit of shelling. Missed first parade. Many up before Carse (?) Cleaning wagons. Amm. etc. Mined cellar in Beugnatre blown up: 4 men killed. Young's brother & Lt. McQueen missing altogether, 8 p.m.

Thu 29 (665-122). 10 men missed 1st parade & made to do Stables on their own. Wet & drizzly as usual. Changed horse-bits. Got new pay-books. Turned out to get bogged G.S. out. (?) Shoe from 45 canteen.

Fri 30 (666-123). Clean wagons. Parcel from Florrie. Bldg canteen. McCarty down from pits. Thomson ... (/) from near W.L. Biscuits & coffee for supper.

Sat 31 (667-124). Cant{een} open after b'fast. Bisc., jam, flour, chocolate sold out. Build shed for picket. To W.L. with note for drivers. Pugh's br[o] here. More stuff from Inf. canteen. Rumour about going to pits. More villages supposed to be taken. Fritz supposed to be getting back further.

APR

Sun 1 (668-125). As usual. Over to village (Favreuil) for timber for picquet shed. H'day in afternoon. Fritz brought one of our balloons down.

Mon 2 (669-126). As usual. Weather about the same but wind colder. Rode to Mobile Vet. Corps in Bapaume with crook horse. Saw prisoners & wounded. After dinner to Favreuil to fill water cart. Cold night. Snow after tea.

