

SEP Belgium

1917

Mon 3 (823-279). Rev. 7 a.m. Moved off 9.30 a.m. thro' Zuytpiene **(round Cassel) Castre-Eecke W.L., near latter about 5 p.m. Tea & turned in to tent.** Went to B.H.Q. to see about drawing £10 in paybook. Fine day.

Tue 4 (824-280). As usual. Fine day. Exercise after dinner. Put up horses in lines.

Wed 5 (825-281). As usual. March to (?) Stiesovine for bath & change. Clean guns, etc. after dinner. Fritz planes over bombing close to us last night about 10 p.m.

Thu 6 (826-282). As usual. Bdr. Thompson on leave. Showery after tea. ½ h'day. Bob came over from Renescure. Showery night. Pass arrived. Major Campbell back.

Fri 7 (827-283). As usual. (?) Set chat certificate fr. Dr. ---- at Hqrs. Walked about 2 mls to Caestre. Caught train about 11.30 a.m. for Boulogne. Arr. about 6 p.m. ----- of an uphill march, about 2 miles to camp. (St. Martin les Boulogne.) Had tea. Slept in hut. No blankets. With a 43rd Bty. chap, 4th Div., named Lanham.

"Blighty Leave"

Sat 8 (828-284). Rev. About 6.30 a.m. B'fast & a wash. Stamped passes. Left for boat about 10.30 a.m. Boat left about 20 to 2. 3 boats, 3 destroyers. Arr. Folkestone 3.30 p.m. Caught train which left about 5 p.m. Arrived Victoria [Stn] 7.30 p.m. Marched to Horseferry Road. Pass stamped. Change money. Hot bath & change of clothes. Tea at war Chest. Wrote letters. Turned in about 11.30 p.m. (Dormitories like (?) Anzac Hostel.)

Sun 9 (829-285). Up about 7.30 a.m. Had a shave & b'fast. Met Bdr.s Thompson & Phillips. Went down Petticoat Lane & bought w'proof coat, 30/- . Rode thro' Hyde Park & looked at Rotten Row. Had dinner near H.Park. Left Roy & Tommie & I went out to see Reg Bush, Streaam. Very nice people. Doris, Clair, Misses Coblion. Had a supper. Fred Dohlen stayed there. Electric tram back to Black friars Bdge. & strolled along Embankment to W. Minster Bdge.

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Mon 10 (830-286). Arr. home about 1.30 a.m. Turned in (War Chest). Up about 9 a.m. B'fast ---- (?)--- & went to Comm. Bank: drew £20. Left watch. Had lunch at Corner House. Went to Oxford Theatre & saw 'The Better 'Ole'. Very good. Went to St. Paul's & had a look round. Met Reg 7 p.m. at Regent Palace Hotel, Piccadilly, & had dinner. Very enjoyable. Finished at 9 p.m. & went to St. James Station by (?) cab, thence to War Chest. Brush-up & then out to Euston (NON stout & non ale at pub.) Caught Glasgow train at 11.30 p.m.

Tue 11 (831-287). Arr. at Carlisle about 6 a.m. Strolled round town & had b'fast & then went to Edinburgh, arr. about 12.15 p.m. Booked room. Had shave, then lunch. Went to Forth Bridge by bus. Fine trip & bridge. Home about 4 p.m. Strolled thro' Edinburgh Castle. Fine view from top. Saw Scotties drilling. Also passed St. Giles Cathedral & then went into Princes Park & met two girls. Went to theatre (Lyceum, 'The Pride of London'). Not bad show.) Back to bed.

Wed 12 (832-288). Missed Glasgow train thro' sleeping in so had to bolt for the 10.7 a.m. which arr. at 11 a.m. Booked bed at Central Sth Hotel, then had lunch & went out to Wemyss Bay by train. Across the Firth of Clyde in steamer to Rothsaye. Pretty trip & we had dinner on board. (Sort of zither played with two sticks, a concertina & a harp.) Met 2 nice girls in town. Went to picture show & then took them home. Back by tram to hotel. Taxi round Glasgow for 2 hrs. Saw cathedral.

Thu 13 (833-289). Up at 8 a.m. Caught 10.46 a.m., after b'fast, for Ballock. Passed singers' John Brown's [& Wm.] Beardmore's Erskine House, thro' Dunbarton & caught Loch Lomond boat. Arr. at Inversnaid at 2 p.m. Walked round Rob Roy's cave & Inversnaid falls. Got slight wet & came back to boat. Two Aust. Sergeants had two -----(?)----- girls with them (real cards.) One got wet & had to go below to the engine room to dry. Back to Ballock at 7 p.m. Got out at Dalmair & met Reg & friends about 8.30 p.m. R. Birthday. Tried to book hotel for selves but could not so went for a stroll & sit-down.

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Back by myself & I booked up for two at Central Hotel, 12 MN. Talk to Aust. Captain, A.M.C.

Fri 14 (834-290). Strolled round & met Tommie at station. Got permit from Minister of Munitions, (Bath Dr.) to visit National Projectile Factory. Very interesting. 1,000s of girls employed. After lunch, went to RankinGlen on train. Baek & I caught the 4.35 p.m. to Cardiff. Arr. Creuse 11.45 a.m.

Sat 15 (835-291). Got into carriages that were to [be] put on Cardiff train which comes from L'pool. Met a nice girl & her lady-friend, Mrs RAINER Boswell. Yarned all the way to ----- (?) where she left us. Arr. Cardiff about 6.15 a.m. Had something to eat, also a wash & shave. Arr. Pontypridd about 8.40 a.m. Slept 2 hrs before lunch. After lunch, went to golf with Florrie & Miah & back to tea & supper. Went to see Mrs Porcher. Uncle Robert [Snape] came.

Sun 16 (836-292). B'fast in bed 10 a.m. Hot bath. Strolled round common & Rocking Stone after lunch. Back to tea. Yarned & had a little music.

Mon 17 (837-293). Wrote letter home & to Bob. Saw the girls: Misses Evans, Lewis & reese. Miss Harvie's friend wounded in France. She had been to see him. Went to Cardiff with Florrie (shopping.) Caught London train about 6 p.m. In London about 9.20 p.m. Went to H'ferry for gear & tea. Then to Imp[erial] by taxi. Booked two beds & had a drink in the smoke room.

Tue 18 (838-294). Tom turned up about 6 a.m. & after b'fast we booked seats for 'Zig Zag' at Hippodrome. Went thro' Westminster Abbey with guide (organ was going.) Strolled round H's of P. Then to Canada Hqrs. Taxi across to Minster & London A'ges (?) & back to Can. Hqrs to see Tommie's friend but he was away. Taxi to Savoy. Had a fine lunch. Then sat in smoke room & had liqueur & Bacarolls. Went to 'Zig Zag'. Very pretty girls, etc. Cicely Eldon & 'The Electric Fish.' Out to The Starnd & had our photos taken. Met Reg & his friend there. Taxi to Imp. For dinner. Arr.[anged] to go up the Thames. Left

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there & went to 'Airs & Graces' at The Princess Theatre. Not much after 'Zig Zag'. Met Geo. Tate, Stan D. & his wife. Walked home to bed.

Wed 19 (839-295 as -285-----mis-numbered from here on). Up & b'fast & shave by 20 to 11 a.m. Saw 'Kitty too late for Chasing XX.' Reg went to W'minster Bdge to see about Thames trip. Too late so started for Woolwich, then Charing Cross & wound up at Y.M.C.A., Traf. Sq. & decided to bolt for Brighton. Caught 5 to 12 train & arr. shortly after 2 p.m. Had lunch & strolled on pier, then taxi on (?) Victoria Drive. Showery & picked up 2 girls out of rain. Went to Band Concert on pier, then had lunch & strolled round the town & back to band concert on pier. After, we took the tram to station. Had supper & said farewell. Arr. Victoria about 11 p.m. Went home to bed.

Thu 20 (840-286). Tube to Paddington. & caught train to Windsor about 11 a.m. Arr. about 12 & a guide took us around the outside of the castle, then we hired a carriage & drove thro' park & forest. Climbed George III's statue. Saw deer & Henry VIII's oak tree. Had nice lunch & went around Eton Coll. Finished up at Slough about 4 p.m. (30/- he wanted £2 for the trip.) Back to London. Had dinner at little Swiss girl's table. Went to see Gladys Cooper in 'The Yellow Ticket' at The Playhouse, nr. Charing Cross. Very good show. Had supper & went home.

Fri 21 (841-287). Saw Fluffy for Bob. B'fast in bed. Taxi to meet Thom. Friend, George Havers. Lunch at Lyons' restaurant in Piccadilly. Had a shave. Saw our photos. I then went to Bayswater to see Miss James. Met T & his friend at Imp. Had tea & went to 'The Invisible Toe' (H.B. Ironing), 'Savoy'. Said goodbye to Kitty. Not bad. Had supper in Strand & went home to write a few letters.

Sat 22 (842-288). Bed about 1.30 a.m. Up again at 5 a.m. & went to Victoria by tube. Caught a train about 7 a.m. for Folkestone.....

France

Arr. Boulogne about 12 noon & marched up hill to rest camp. Had lunch in a mess hut & were told to be ready to move at 10 p.m. (Sea was choppy coming

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across & T lost his hat.) Marched down to train & got aboard. No side windows.

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Sun 23 (843-289). Train moved about 10 to 1 a.m. Slow trip. Arr. at Poperinghe about 10 a.m. Had b'fast (eggs, etc.) & walked & rode in lorries to Dickiebush, then back & discovered wagon lines about 1 p.m. Heard straight off that Scottie Gilligan & Dave Berry were dead. Also that we had had 14 casualties to date. Went to funeral of Dave. Slept in hut. Harvey was killed & Parkinson wounded last week.

Mon 24 (844-290). Cooks fatigue all day. Then had church service after lunch. Horse picket at night as men are so short & everyone is packing ammunition.

Tue 25 (845-291). As usual. Told off for man to carry amm. but only got 1½ ml away & were sent home. After tea, told to go to pits with Sgt. Walker, Potts & Richards. Arr. near position about 10 p.m. After passing Shrap. Corner, Hell-fire Corner, Oxford Circus, etc. Nearly lost & had to take cover. Slept in big dugout.

Wed 26 (846-292). To Rocket Post with Sam. To Group H.Q. for despatch. Making bunks. Told to be ready for F.O.O. by 6 a.m. Norton, slight wound last night. (Lt. Beattie wounded during night by whizz-bang, trying to put fire out, 45th Bty. Neilson & Lane killed yesterday morning. Jim Strachan knocked off his horse by a dear Tommy, yesterday.

Thu 27 (847-293). S.O.S.s all night. Hop-over yesterday morning. Up at 5.30 a.m. Left about 6.30 a.m. – past Sanctuary Wood & Clapham Junction to 58th Batt. H.Q. (Pill Box 12 ft. x 12 ft., nr. Glencourse Copse) Battlefields strewn with dead – Very crook. Had a couple of runs with urgent messages: 60 Pdr. dropping short. Went out alone 4.30 p.m. & laid line from Cable-head to H.Q. in our Pill Box. Batt. had only been in support [trenches] for stunt but had been cut to hell. Had about 150 men left. They went out tonight. Just before

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they left, we started a bombardment. Machine guns & art. putting up the barrage. D.4 guns are fine. 2 bullets to a yard. Chance: 1 in 25 of getting thro'. Fritz of course retaliated but our line stood it. Batt. had to wait till it was over. Fine crowd of officers – they had whisky & rum & plenty of rations. After they went, we turned in & slept all night.

Fri 28 (848-294). Rather quiet this morning. The fine weather still holds good. Had good b'fast. No Batt. H.Qrs turned up so Mr Barber & I went to Black watch Corner & found 31st Batt. H.Qrs in another pill box. Sniped at by 77[mm]s. Back home & struck some 31st Batt. N.C.O.s Real cards. Told us all about the barrage & advance & Stokes bombs in pill boxes, also shell-hole advance. Fritz strafed the joint several times. S.O.S. at night.

Sat 29 (849-295). Gas during night we didn't get any sleep. Shell-shock chap with us. Started off for home just ahead of rough barrage & home about 9.30 a.m. James & Morrison killed yesterday. Phillips & Kent wounded. Gun blown out yesterday. (?) Tommy work a snip. (?) Messed round all day. Several S.O.S.s during night.

Sun 30 (850-296). Up 6.30 a.m. After b'fast left for Rocket Post neat Clapham Junction. Went to Stirling Castle to try for flares. Up looking for S.O.S. signals from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.

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Mon 1 (851-297). No sleep. Several S.O.S.s. No relief. Walk. Brought up more rations for us to stay a further 24 hrs,. Heavy shelling & more S.O.S.s Harry R. killed on line.

Tue 2 (852-298). Relieved about 9 a.m. & went back to the pits. Messed round all day & were relieved about 8 p.m. by (?) Tommies. Leske & I went back past Halfway House along ordinary road, to near Shrap. Corner, to stop wagons till ordered. Then walked home. Had cocoa at Dickiebush.

[Harold's Service Record erroneously reports that he was evacuated, wounded, on 2 Oct 1917, but in the details, a different soldier, Bdr. Oakenfull, is named].

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Wed 3 (853-299). Messed round nearly all day. Harry R's funeral afternoon.

Thu 4 (854-300). Rev. 6 a.m. Stables, etc. Fix sig. gear all afternoon. Showery. Hop-over today said to have been successful.

Fri 5 (855-301). Rev. 5 a.m. Cold. Went thro' Reninghelst nr. Boeschepe thro' Steenwerke to a little place for the night. Cold & showery.

Sat 6 (856-302). Rev. 5 a.m. Shift about 8 a.m. thro' Steenwoorde, Hazebrouck, Mort au Bois to Sec Bois. Cold, wet & miserable. (Had our lunch in an estaminet.) Clocks put back tonight. Spued.

Sun 7 (857-303). Rev. 6 a.m. Billets scattered everywhere. Cold & wet. After dinner parade at 4 p.m. Went to bed early.

Mon 8 (858-304). Cleaning & packing up & shift out after lunch to a place 1½ mls way. Hear from Ray.

Tue 9 (859-305). Clean up gun park. & wagons Water horses. Lay line along Rly. to B.A.C.

Wed 10 (860-306). Signalling. Lay line to officers' billet. Saw 12 tanks going up the line on a train. (Cavalry went up the line - I didn't see them tho'.) Saw girls at estaminet near rly. Bought bread & butter in Haze.[brouck]. Back home & told to fill in form for nomination to St John's Wood [Royal Artillery Cadet School]. Took it to Bde H.Qrs, 1½ mls.

Thu 11 (861-307). Signalling flags, lamp & shutter. Lamps at night.

Fri 12 (862-308). Signalling flags & buzzer. Parcel from home. Note from (?) Newport. Bed early.

Sat 13 (863-309). Sig. Told to go to Hqrs with Corp. Cameron to interview with Col. Rabett at 2 p.m. Went down & he had a look at us.

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Sun 14 (864-310). To Hazebrouck, Bailleul, Reninghelst, Hoograffe. 1st Anzac, but Bob was out at 2nd D.H.Q. so went nearly to Poperinghe & caught motor to Steenwoorde. Saw him & had a talk. Motor to edge of Cassel then on to Hazebrouck & walked home to Le Souverain. Away from 11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Mon 15 (865-311). On phone. Wrote letters, etc. Spooks messed round & got molo.

Tue 16 (866-312). Out to B.H.C. on line as we couldn't get thro' to H.Q. After lunch went to dentist. Teeth all right. Gas inspection.

Wed 17 (867-313). As usual. Clean harness, etc. after b'fast. ½ h' day. Notice of move after tea. & we have to be ready at 6.30 a.m.

Thu 18 (868-314). Rev. 4 a.m. Ready to move 7 a.m. Froggie drunk. Pinched our gear. Rolled in wire with McDonald & Potts. Had lunch & came in on motor thro' Bailleul & Westoutre & Reninghelst. Messed round all night, unloaded gear & slept in it till midnight & then went to sleep in Tommy cook-house.

Fri 19 (869-315). Up 6 a.m. Waited for G.S. wagons & loaded them. Messed round all day & Fritz bombed us all night. 5 men killed & 3 or 4 wounded in 45th about 80 yds from our w'lines.

Sat 20 (870-316). As usual. Corp. Cameron told to report to Anzac Hqrs as soon as possible. I went with him to bring his horse back. (Poperinghe.) Went to Hoograff to see Bob. Back about 11.30 a.m. Clean harness, etc. Lt. Lee told me about Fleming having spoken up for me for St John's Wood --(?)---- up.

Sun 21 (871-317). As usual. Church parade at Y.M.C.A. hut, Reninghelst. Neish & Harry Rice came over & spoke about N.B.T. going home. Fritz bombed at about 5 a.m. Stables 4.30 p.m.

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Mon 22 (872-318). Haig hammering this morning very heavily. Showery until about 9 a.m. Went to Anzac for telephones. Got a 4 wire plug for Fulller['s] phone. Saw Bob. Back about 12 midday. (Jim Strahan & farrier's cart). Kit inspection. Bob came over & had tea. Packed up & went over by W.L. as Tommy Inf. came into huts. Neish came over again & he & I & Tommie & Bob went to Anzac Hqrs to make inquiries about N.B.T. Seems to think we have a chance [of being repatriated]. Came back in an ambulance & Fritz dropped a bomb right in front of us. Gunner Atkins wounded at Hqrs. Bomb made a hole like a 12 inch shell.

Tue 23 (873-319). Drizzling rain. Walk. & the Major went to pick our gun possie. Fix phones, etc.

Wed 24 (874-320). As usual. Told to be ready to move at 8,30 a.m. G.S. & guns went up to possie thro' Zillebeke & Valley Cottages. Very shell-hole. Good dug-out.

Thu 25 (875-321). On phones 5 to 8 a.m. Out on Group line. Guns registered about 12 midday to 3.45 p.m. Very cold on phone at control station. Few shells about & our lines were cut. Practice barrage at 4 p.m. Gun crews arrived.

Fri 26 (876-322). Phone 5 to 8 a.m. Wet & drizzly. Stunt started at 20 to 6 a.m. Fritz put some very close to us & battery. On phone at control pit. Walk. Came in & told [me] to go to Teleph. Exchange Clapham Jn. At 5 p.m. for 24 hrs. It was 5 p.m. then & nearly dark. Had a rotten walk as S.O.S. was on & guns were going all along. Pulled in at Stirling Castle for a while & then on to C Ū [Trench]. Bit of straffing going on. Slight knock-back in stunt of morning's No. 1 line for us (C Group) on board so I turned in.

Sat 27 (877-323). Guns all round there. Stranded in shell-holes & mud; a very desolate scene. I left for home about 11 a.m. as there was nothing to do. Shells about. Fritz staffed 6" Howitzers behind us & some very, very near us. Put candles out several times. Had to mend the lines.

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Sun 28 (878-324). Phone 1.30 to 3.30 a.m. Tommie T. Slight wound behind knee. Shells about all day. Fix entrance to dugout.

Mon 29 (879-325). As usual. Fine day. Fritz staffed us last night & first thing this morning. Blew Gilligan & Dusty Edwards dugout in. Both bruised & shaken. Gas shell thro' roof of another dugout Gassed Sgt Roderick & Gnr. Brown. Halter & Neilson also went away, gassed.

Tue 30 (880-326). Phone to 3.30 a.m. Few gas shells about. (Gill died).

Wed 31 (881-327). As usual. Gas all night. McDonald went down.

NOV

Thu 1 (882-328). Relief came up. Bernie Rowe & I went down. 2 shells close. Rode horse down. Out of traffic. W.L. near windmill, Hallibut Corner. Messed round all day.

Fri 2 (883-329). Clean saddles. Put in tent for sports gear.

[Promotion]

Sat 3 (884-330). As usual. Made **Temp. Bombardier from 2/10/17**. Clean gear. Bruno sewed stripe & colors on.

MISSING ENTRIES:

Sun 4 NOV (885-331) to -----

-----part of Thu 10 JAN (942-7, being Harold's seventh day of officers' school).

Sun 22 DEC, 1917.

Detached to No. 1 Royal Artillery Cadet School, St John's Wood, London.

JAN

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Thu 10 (942-7----- (first part of day's entry missing)-----
(Gun drill, 11 to 12), (Laying, 12 to 1), Lecture 2.10 to 3.10). (Riding 3.15 to 4.15). (Phy drill (?) 4.55 to 6.15). Coffee & bisc. at 10.30 a.m. Dinner 1.10 p.m.