

DIARY FRAGMENTS: 11TH JANUARY TO 29TH JULY 1917.

The following is a merging of two versions of a diary- or journal-fragments, one typed, the other hand-written:

11 Jan. From Bernafay/ WoodMontauban..... granted **10 days' LEAVE TO ENGLAND.** Started off for Albert, partly on foot, partly by motor lorry.

12 Jan. Left Albert by train at 2 a.m. via Rouen to Le Havre.

13 Jan. Train arrived e Havre 4 a.m. (delayed 2 hours Rouen on account of Zeppelins flying overhead). Marched to Leave Camp. Caught S.S "Donegal" to Southampton about midnight.

14 Jan. Arrived Southampton 8 a.m., train to London: arrived Waterloo Stn. 11a.m. Walked to A.I.F. H.Qrs. Horseferry Rd. Got some cash: taxi to Cosmo Hotel, Southampton Row. In evening, went to "Aida" at Aldwych Theatre

15 Jan. Walked round London in morning. Aftn. Saw Miss James, Bark Place, Bayswater. Had tea there and went to 1st. C.S.Church, Sloane Square.

16 Jan. Saw St. Paul's & Westminster Abbey.

17 Jan. Caught 3.35 p.m. train to Barry, Wales. Uncle Robert (Snape) met me at station at 7.30 p.m.

18 Jan. Walked round Barry Dock Island with Uncle Robert.

19 Jan. Trained to Maesteg via Bridgend (fine scenery on way) Had tea there, also dinner, with Bert Snape and family – then retd. to Barry.

20 Jan. Went to Pontypridd with Uncle R.: saw over Maritime Colliery, thence to Florrie & Miah Hughes' house in Gelliwastad Rd. Florrie to me through St. Catherine's Church and to see the ancient Rocking & Druid stones. Stayed night at Ponttypridd.

21 Jan. Walked round Pontypridd with Florrie. After dinner trained to Cardiff with Aunt Lizzie. Saw Cardiff Castle and round Cardiff. (Llandaff Cathedral in distance). Public Bldgs. Caught 3.6 train to London. Went to Cosmo Hotel. Saw "Cinderella Pantomime" at London Opera House.

22 Jan. Went to 1st Church morning & 3rd Church evening. Tower Bridge afternoon.

23 Jan. To Southampton 4.30 pm. Train. Caught boat in evening and arrived back at Le Havre early next morning.

24 Jan. Marched to Rest Camp Havre and delayed there (freezing cold) till Jan. 31st. Then entrained and arrived Albert Feb 1st. (Found Div HQ had moved to Albert in the meantime.)

3 Feb. Move to the Dingle (a dismal hole between Fricourt & Contalmaison). Recd. A letter from Harold written from Pontypridd.

12 Feb. Bomb dropped near us by aeroplane in the evening (German of course).

25 Feb. We discovered the Germans were retreating.

16 Mar. Moved to Bazentin le Petit on foot. (To receive C. Pay from time S. left 28 days ago).

18 Mar. Walked with J.E. to see fallen aeroplane. Passed numerous dead men on the way – mostly Germans – top-boots with legs in them, etc. Many bombs & dud shells strewn all over the place. Burning of Bapaume (by Germans) – saw reflection in evening.

22 Mar. Advanced H.Q. opened in ruined town of Bapaume. Selected to go so walked up at 9 a.m. along duckboards (snow falling most of the way) – thro' ruined village of Le Sars. Climbed up Butte de Warlencourt – dead Germans about – derelict tanks. Bapaume still burning when we arrived there.

24 Mar. Saw Harold.

25 Mar. Shifted out of the German dugout which we had occupied since our arrival in Bapaume & lodged in Nissan hut. The hôtel de ville went up with a terrific explosion at 11.35 p.m. About 20 men were buried in the ruins.

(Now, as always, Man's thought protected by Divine Principle implies the protection of his experience which is purely mental.)

The Hotel de Ville, Bapaume had apparently been left with a clockwork mine by the Germans and blew up. Two members of the French Chamber of Deputies lost their lives. I had been standing in front of the hôtel de ville the previous day looking at the "Albatross" aeroplane which our airman had brought down. Prince Fredk. Carl of Prussia was the occupant. We shifted out of the German dugout which we had occupied since our arrival here into a Nissan bow-hut on account of the possibility of the dugout being mined seeing that several other dugouts in the vicinity had gone up.

28 Mar. Went back to the "Dingle" (Fricourt-Contalmaison).

14 April Shifted from the Dingle to the Monument Commemoratif (on the Bapaume-Arras Rd. Between Bapaume, Saignies & Favreuil).

16 April Walked to ruined village of Saignies. Germans in their retreat had destroyed everything, including fruit trees.

18 April Walked thro' Favreuil to Beugnatre to wagon-lines of 46th Battery to see Harold but he was away at an Observation Post. Left letters for him.

27/28 April Harold came to see me at the Dingle.

- 30 April.** Met Harold 6 a.m.
- 3 May.** Got up to see big bombardment. Heaviest I have seen or heard.
- 4 May.** 2 bombs dropped close to us by Boche plane flying low.
- 6 May.** Boche plane flying low turned on Machine Gun all around us.
- ? May** Moved back to Dingle.
- ? May.** Walked across country to Albert. Wild hyacinths & violets abt.
- 14 May.** With A.E.M. & Tom Orton biked to Albert and caught 7.45 a.m. [train] to Amiens. Got home by motor-lorry in afternoon.
- 17 May** Moved to Rubempre.
- 2 June.** Biked to Naours to see "Souterrains."
- 3 June** Got day off and biked to Amiens with Paynie
- 17 June** Shifted to from Rubempre to Bancourt (2 kilos. past Bapaume.)
- 29 July** Left Bancourt via Amiens, Bethune, Aire to Renescure.
- 9 Sept.** Transferred to **AUSTRALIA CORPS HQ** at Hoograaf. (Travelled from Renescure via Cussel, Steenvoorde, & Abeele).
- 15 Nov.** Moved with Corps HQ to Flêtre.

Telephone No. 18555

Telegrams:-

“Teloosmo, London

COSMO HOTEL

AND REGINA RESTAURANT
SOUTHAMPTON ROW
LONDON, W.C.

Diary (hand-written)

Saturday Jan. 13th 1917

Boat S.S. “Donegal” arrived at Southampton 8 a.m.

Arrived at London Waterloo Station about noon.

Booked room at Cosmo Hotel.

Evening - went to see “Aida” performed at the Aldwych Theatre

Sunday Jan. 14th 1917

Didn't get up till 11 a.m..

After dinner went by tube railway to Bark Pl. Bayswater. Had tea there & went to 1st Church Sloane Terrace.

Monday Jan. 15th 1917

Went to see St. Paul's & Westminster Abbey.

Had lunch at Westminster

Went to Colosseum. Heard Mark Hamburg & Vesta Tilley & other variety artists.

Evening - saw fine performance of La Bohème at Aldwych Theatre.

Tuesday Jan. 16th 1917

Went for bus rides round London. Amused at girl conductors on buses & tubes.

Caught 3.35 p.m. train from Paddington to Cardiff, thence to Barry, 7.30 p.m. Uncle Robert met me at station.

Wed. Jan. 17th 1917

Went round Barry, Island & Docks with Uncle Robert.

Thurs. Jan. 18th 1917

Took 10.6 a.m. train to Maesteg - Beautiful scenery all the way. Plenty of snow. Saw Bert & wife & family. Had dinner & tea there & then returned to Barry.

Fri. Jan. 19th 1917

Uncle R. & self took train to Pontypridd. Looked over Maritime Colliery. Went to Florrie's place in Gwelliwastad Rd. & had tea there.

Saw ancient Pontypridd bridge (1708); rocking stone & Druid's stones. St Catherine's fine church & organ & Ashfurlong. (Uncle R. returned home after tea.) Walked round Taff St. with Miah.

Sat. Jan 20th 1917

Went up on hill with Florrie. Beautiful view from there. Got a glimpse of Grandpa's

steel-works. Saw the rear of Ashfurlong from Grove, junction of Taff & Rhonda Rivers, visited Mrs & Messrs Porcher (next Ashfurlong) & Aunt May's two sisters. After dinner - said farewell - to Florrie & Miah & went with Aunt Lizzie to Cardiff. Saw Cardiff Castle & ancient St John's Church & the fine Public Bldgs there. Left Aunt Lizzie at station & took 3.7 p.m. train to London.

Evening - went to 'Cinderella Pantomime' at the opera House. The Opera House is a magnificent building built by Hammerstein for opera.

Sunday Jan. 21st 1917

Morning - to 1st C.S. Church Curzon St. They have a beautiful organ here & a splendid organist also.

Letter No. 62

January 21st 1917

My Dear All,

I am back in London again after seeing all the relatives except Uncle Andrew who was 100 miles away in N. Wales. I got a very warm welcome from them all. Florrie & Miah & especially Aunt Lizzie are awfully nice & were very eager to show me round & wanted me to stay longer, but we had arranged that Harold should put in most time with them & myself with Uncle Robert & as we naturally want to see everything of importance in London, 10 days doesn't give you much time.

Pontypridd is a very pretty town I think & surroundings are most interesting. Ashfurlong is now tenanted by a Mr Llewellyn Jones.

I was very pleased to see Uncle Robert again & Aunt Maggie couldn't do enough for me. They had just a week previously heard the sad news confirming Leslie's death.

Bert was pleased to see me. He talks exactly like Douglas & I kept thinking he was Douglas. His wife is very nice. He wanted me to stay the night at Maesteg but of course I hadn't time.

Maesteg is very pretty in fact all the surrounding country is beautiful(Tonder ?), (Major ?) - Bridgend.

Needless to say the Pontypridd people were very surprised to see Uncle Robert after 10 years but everything went splendidly & Aunt Lizzie said to me afterwards that she hoped that the misunderstanding was now settled.

Aunt Lizzie made a lot of inquiries about father & would like to see him. She seems to have had a trying time during those various illnesses of the others but appears to be very well & active at present. She is very lively & says most amusing things.

Aunt Maggie says that she & Bert & family are now not on speaking terms. As far as I can gather, Bert has not been doing well for some time but keeps up appearances apparently by borrowing money from her. He is supposed to be still offended over their trip to Australia

although he didn't speak particularly unkindly of Pearson to me. Douglas (Snape) seems to be Aunt Maggie's favourite now & (between ourselves) from the way she talks, don't be a bit surprised if she & Uncle Robert go out to Australia again shortly. The above remarks are of course just passed on as they may possibly be of interest to you. Aunt Maggie couldn't have been nicer to me than she was, or have done more for me than she did during my stay. Bert's father-in-law is supposed to have plenty of gilt & lives with them but their objection is that he sticks too tightly to it.

The Keys cannot understand why they haven't heard from Aunt May for so long.

Bert expects to have to join the military in about a month

Florrie is very active & was buzzing round in charge of a "Flag Day" while I was there. I suppose she's one of the most popular personalities in Ponty. Aunt Lizzie says she's a great ad. for the Bank. Miah is quieter but a jolly nice fellow.

"The Horse & Groom" in Pontypridd is still going strong & Uncle Robert & I had a drink there on the strength of the old associations.

Aunt Lizzie pointed out a railway bridge designed by Father & Grandpa & the fine old Llandaff Cathedral & Uncle Robert pointed out "The Towers" where old Price used to live, from the train.

You can understand how interesting it was for me to see all these places though I would certainly have far rather come by a smoother road than by way of the Army.

Love to All,
Bob.

"Appendix"

Whilst at Barry your letter dated 1st Dec. To Uncle R. & Aunt mArrived. They seemed delight to get it. Very sorry to hear of Aunt Alice's death & please give Uncle Joe my sympathy if you see him.

I'm very much in love with London. Am disappointed that Harold hasn't so far been able to get here.

Uncle Robert offered to let me have what money I wanted so I borrowed £3 from him. I don't think I will need it so will be able to send it back to him in a week or so --- I didn't have to bother Miah.

I am in the best of health & trust you all are the same.

I am
Your loving son & brother,
Bob.

**Post Office
SNAPE
Saxmundham
(England)**

10.2.17

Dear Sir,

I expect you think by this time that you are never going to hear anything from me. But I have not forgotten your letter I assure you. I have been quite unable to get the Photos till today. We have a man in the village that takes them, only he is so busy. You will see Snape is only a village with about 500 before the War but there are not many now. The Maltings is the largest place here this in connection with Bow Brewery London. But of course there's not the business being done now as before the war. Still these photos will give you a faint idea of what Snape is like.

I suppose you are interested as it seems to be the same name as yourself.

Hope these reach you safe.

Trusting you are well,

I remain yours faithfully,

Henry Boulton.

No. 74

**Someplace in France
25th April 1917**

My dear Frank

I make no apology for sending you a machine-made letter because I have no ink and because a lead pencil is a most objectionable instrument to write with. (Pencils are of course good enough for draftsmen* and such ilk.)

“Far away in Arcady, summer never passes.” You know the song. Well, I had just decided that Far away in Northern France winter never passes but during the last few days we have actually been getting a drop of warm weather.

26th April 1917

Your letter of the 28th Feb., with photographs enclosed, arrived the other day. You seem to be some class with the camera. That one of yourself is not bad (“Ishtar Pthaz” Gawd of the Egyptians). If the backgrounds are not faked there must be huge quantities of flowers knocking around the garden at present. I note you go in for those flash little bows round your neck. I also note that the gentleman standing on the Selby railway station is Father. Before I looked at the back I thought it must be the man who owned the station.

And who is "Ziff" ? The old Ziff! The most hideous creature!! The treacherous one with the stick??? I puzzled hard for 13 hours then sent for Sexton Blake. (Here's a sovereign – keep that cab in sight ----- another sovereign if you can run him down). I suppose it's Arthur. Tut. Tut! For the nonce, I say. What wouldst thou with me , woman? What manner of a man are you? Have at thee villain, or by my halidom, I will run thee through with my trusty pikestaff!!!! I notice from the Bulletin that Phil Smith the comic comedian is still cutting curious capers in the Melbourne theatres.)

So you have purchased, bought, acquired or otherwise possessed yourself of a motorcicle. Well, well! "Who would have thought it, who would have known" (Meistersinger) I suppose "the arrow in its flight is not swifter than thou" (Samson et Delilah) "I saw in splendour shining, a knight of glorious mien" (Lohengrin, but that doesn't seem to fit in).

When I say "Addio del passato" (Trav.) to the land of Gaul (gall) and "once more with joy we are returning home" (Tannhauser) I'll either toss music altogether, France or I'll go mad and buy a few thousand gramophone records. I hope "I am chosen" for one of the first returning boats.

CHAPTER III. Andante, serioso

The tin of Swallow & Ariel biscuit sent by Mother came safely to hand the other day. Also a parcel of socks and ditto for Harold. Harold is about 3 miles from me. I went twice to see him but missed him each time. He came to see me a couple of days ago and had a yarn with me for about an hour. He was just in time to get his parcel also. Ruby was good enough to send a very decent parcel too.

I sent a p.n. [postal note] for 2/6d over to Florrie asking her to try and get me a cheap German dictionary. She has sent me a nice little dictionary. I wanted it to try and translate cards, etc. which we get from dead Huns, etc.

Have just received a jolly fine letter from Aunt Lizzie (4 pages).

As I'm getting rather blown out I'll finish.

Much love to all concerned

Your loving brother,

Bob.

[* Frank was a draftsman]

No 75

**La France
le Mai 5, 1917**

My dear Father,

“Comment allez-vous?” as the French would say. But there are no French here (save M. the interpreter representing Mission Française). No civilians. No shops. All the churches & houses are “ne plus pas” or, “nah poo”, as Thos. Atkins spells it.

Meanwhile, “the Great War goes merrily on” as Mr Punch says in his latest effusion. Talking of Mr Punch, I am beginning to appreciate this fine old English paper. I admire it for its clean wholesome wit; its sarcasm without malice.

Mr Weather has just favoured us with half a dozen of the most beautiful days. Of course you know yourself from experience what manner of fine day France can turn out when she likes. A swallow flew into our office hut yesterday. The leaves on the smaller trees & the big trees may be expected to follow suit any day. You know the arrival of spring can't be realised in Australia as it can in Europe. There are so many evergreens in Australia. Over here the landscape takes on an almost totally different aspect when the leaves appear.

I have been watching the tremendous bombardment which has been going on for over an hour. I have watched and listened to many, but none so terrific as this. It is hard to describe to you. The sky is lit up all along with the flashes of our guns, & these flashes are intermingled with lurid little flashes all along the ridge ----- the bursting in the air of the enemy's shrapnel shells. Then there is the sharp crack of the howitzers & the heavy boom of the field & naval guns, while all along the line an endless stream of star shells & coloured rockets keeps shooting up into the sky. (The Germans send up about ten times as many as our fellows do). ---- Red rockets for the artillery to increase fire in a particular spot or perhaps to increase or shorten range as the case may be; green lights for something else, golden clusters for something else, “S.O.S.” signals and what not!

The first time you hear one of these bombardments a queer apprehensive feeling seems to creep over you. You think of the tons of heavy stuff in the air; you wonder how many creatures are getting blown off this “mortal coil” every time one of those big high explosive shells hits the ground.

But you soon get over this sort of thing & lose all sentiment.

You know those two great French men Faedherbe & Gambetta! I used to wonder who they were & what they had done. Nearly every French town seems to have either a Rue de Gambetta or a Rue Faedherbe. Well! I read all about Gambetta, the great patriot, recently & have just discovered who Faedherbe was. There is a fine monument in a cemetery not far from here, erected to his memory. He was a general in the French Army 1870 - 72 [Franco Prussian War] This is indeed an interesting cemetery. Did I tell you about the big stone monument the Germans have erected in the centre of it. There is a large crucifix in the centre of the cemetery and the Germans have buried most of their dead in a circle round this. At this period, they had evidently not started their notorious boiling down system.

The noise of the bombardment as I write is almost deafening and has become one continuous rumble, punctuated by the violent shocks of the biggest guns.

One of our brigades has formed quite a decent band. They were playing 'Maretana' near here last night and the sound of "the dear old music" made me again homesick.

As I commenced with a French phrase so I will close with one & wish you "Bon soir et Bon nuit".

Your loving son,

Robert.

VISIT TO A FRENCH CHURCH

o O o

Having managed to spruce ourselves up into a passably presentable state from a sartorial standpoint, we make our way along a cobbled street and in less than half a minute -
Voilà ! Nous sommes arrivés à l'église !

The church is a queer mixture of brick and stone and has the appearance of being "as old as the hills". As a matter of fact, it is nearly as old as the hills, and the aforesaid queer mixture of bricks and stones is accounted for by the fact that the structure has been recently restored. Years ago, so the story runs, the church was partially destroyed during one of the many wars of 'la belle France' - indeed, who knows but Sir Francis and his merry crowd themselves did not have a hand in the business.

(I have vague recollections of reading in my schoolboy days of how the approach of Drake used to be signalled first by the breathless runner to the village with the news, then the violent clanging of the church-bell (the tocsin), the frantic rush to the church by young and old and the barring of the doors by the priests. I can see them now in my mind's eye, ---- the young mother with her child clasped to her breast: the men grabbing the children off their little feet, taking them in their arms and running "toute- suite" to the church; the old men; cripples with agonised expressions on their ----- . Drake & Co. would then arrive with a rush, smash in the door with an improvised battering-ram, pinch the candlesticks and then proceed to smash up the church.)

On entering the church my eyes immediately rove in search of the musical apparatus and, to my disgust, I find myself confronted with the ludicrous spectacle of a pipe-organ without any pipes. (Later on, during a conversation with one of the 'curés', I learned that -- "Monsieur le vicaire, who live in the grand house over there, he thinks the organs would be damaged by the 'canons allemands' so he take it away.")

After listening to the service, which gave me the impression that the curé, seeing that he had to go through with it, had decided to get it over as fast as possible and at the same endeavour

to break his own and all previous records, we made a bolt for the doors - not that we were in any special hurry, but just because everyone else did likewise. Having got outside, the villagers immediately made their way to the épiceries and other shops in the vicinity of the church, to purchase the week's supplies. (Sunday morning here seems to correspond with our Friday night).

ON THE FRENCH VILLAGE PRIEST

-----oOo-----

What a contrast there is between the French village priest and the flabby, red-faced creatures labelled "Priest" in Australia ! The French priest has a somewhat careworn countenance - but his face beams with a kindly smile withal. He seems to have a word of sympathy for everyone, as he proceeds along the village road with a thoughtful gait; with his long black cassock and his broad brimmed hat, his old umbrella tucked under one arm and his hands clasped behind him. Very shallow the religion may be, but the priest is indeed the "father" of the village.

Although the appearance of M. le vicaire is usually anything but spruce, if you're looking for his residence, you will never go wrong if you make your way to the best house in the village. (When I was attached to the A.M.C., one day three little children were playing in the street near our dressing station when a German shell killed two and badly injured the third. What the mother would have done without the village priest I do not know, as their father was away fighting in the South.)

Diese Maschine ist von der Maschinenfabrik
Kappel in Chemnitz - Kappel geliefert
worden. Es ist verboten, die Maschine
beizutreiben, Teile davon zu entfernen
oder sie zu beschädigen.

Le Cateau, d. 4. April 1917.

146

W. Kappel

This Machine is from the Machine Factory of Kappel in Chemnitz.
Kappel delivered it. It is forbidden to set the Machine in motion,
to remove parts from it, or to damage it.

Le Cateau, 24th. April, 1917.

This Machine has been made by the Machine Factory of Kappel
in Chemnitz. It is forbidden to set the Machine in motion, to
remove parts from it, or to damage it.

Le Cateau, 24th. April, 1917.

A secret weapon? Unfortunately, the purpose of the machine is not disclosed. (wb)

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23rd August 1917

My dear All,
Am now back in London again
after cantering all round the country.
As the £20 I wrote for has not arrived
yet I had to borrow £15 from Mabel
& I am arranging with the Common-
wealth Bank to send the money on
to hear when it does arrive.

I have had a most delightful
time, not having a single wet day all
the time over here.

A parcel from Mother arrived
just before I left France, containing
the shirt, sweets etc. The shirt fits

2.
alright & will come in very handy -
thanks for sending it.

I will close up now & wish you a
detailed account of my "trip" when I
get back to France.

Yours of love
Your log. son & br.

Bob.

Am sending 2 bundles of
postcards today.

My dear All

Un-numbered).

FRANCE
26th August 1917

You must excuse a type written letter, but it is much quicker to do it this way and it also enables me to take three copies so that I can send one Home, one to Madge, and the third by the next mail in case the first mail goes to the regions of Davy Jones [Locker]. This is just an account of my movements (in diary form). The type writer is not on my side as it will persist in sticking. I'm afraid it's beginning to feel the effects of the periodical bumpings about it gets.

12th Aug.

Left for Blighty about noon and after about 4 hours train journey arrived at Rest Camp where we were put in tents for the night.

13th Aug.

Hauled out at 2 a.m. and marched to boat, arriving in London about 5 p.m., met L/Cpl. Harry Dinsdale and went with him to Imperial Hotel, Russell Square and booked a room there. We had tea together and went to Daly's Theatre and saw a comic opera, "The Maid of the Mountains."

14th Aug.

Went all through the Tower of London. The Crown Jewels are magnificent. It takes quite a long time to go all round. I think the old suits of armour are wonderfully made, some having joints even for every finger. We were shown where Sir Walter Raleigh was kept for years and the inscriptions he cut in his cell, also where the little princes were put out of the way. I had to put in a large part of the afternoon at the dentist's. Some weeks ago I broke off one of my front teeth on one of the lovely hard "shortbread creams" we get issued to us and as the military dentists won't take on a crowning job I decided to get it fixed up whilst in London. It cost me a magnificent sum of 2 guineas too. We just careered round London in the evening, not going to any shows.

15th Aug.

After dinner we went by bus to Richmond and had tea on the banks of old Father Thames and then got on a small steamboat along the river via Kew and Putney to Westminster Bridge. At 10.30p.m. we caught the train at King's Cross for Edinburgh.

16th Aug.

We arrived at Edinburgh about 8 a.m. and booked a room at the Royal Hotel, Princes Street. (Princes Street may be a fine street but it's the only street in Edinburgh). We got a motorbus to Queensferry, 1/6d. return, and saw the great Forth Bridge. This was a very pretty trip. In the afternoon we had a bit of a rest and a little music. After tea we indulged in a couple of hours of Moving Pictures. - Charles Chaplin as assistant stage hand or something to that effect. As mentioned in the letter I wrote from Scotland, the orchestra gave us selections from "Aida" by special request.

17th Aug.

Caught the 8.45 a.m. train to Glasgow and 10.35 a.m. from Glasgow to Tarn, past the Singer Sewing Machine Works, the large ship-building yards on the Clyde and via

Dunbarton, Helensburgh and Cragendoran (spelt somewhere near right) and along the banks of the Firth of Clyde - all these places being of course more or less beautiful. We passed a number of old castles and things in the train but as the natives we had as fellow passengers couldn't speak English and I couldn't comprehend their lingo, it was no use asking them questions about the scenery.

We got to Tarbet about 4 p.m. (it is a lovely little place on the banks of Loch Lomond) at the foot of Ben Something-or-other hard by Inversnaid. We tead there and caught a little paddlesteamer on the Loch and went right down the lake (I mean "doon the Loch") to Balloch, where we caught a train back to Glasga. Glasgow is a fine place and has some wide streets just like Collins St., Melb.

The girls (of which there are millions) go along the streets in strings of about five, arm in arm, singing, and will get out of the road for nobody.

We would very much have liked to put in a night at Glasgow but time would not permit so we caught the train about 10 p.m. at the Central Station (which is the busiest railway station I have ever seen).

My companion left me at Carlisle, having to change trains and go and visit friends in Lancashire, with an arrangement to meet me t the Imperial Hotel, London, again in two or three days time. Our train got to Crewe at 3 a.m. and I had to get out here and wait until 5 a.m. to get the train to Birmingham. Arrived at Birmingham about 6 a.m. and had to wait 2 more hours so had a look round the city and got lost. However I managed to get back to the station in time for the train, which took me as far as Gloucester and then stranded me again - for 3 hours this time. I put in the 3 hours in the company of a Tommy and we went round to see Gloucester Cathedral. I consider this cathedral one of the finest I have seen and have sent you home several cards of it. It was certainly well worth seeing and very old. Arrived at Cardiff about 4.30 p.m., where the trains had somehow got in a hopeless muddle. I caught a train from the Great Western Station about 5.30 which got me into Taff Station and then "all change". I eventually got another train on to Pontypridd but didn't arrive at Gelliwastad Road till about 7 p.m. taking about 22 hours to do the trip from Glasgow. I was just about fagged out.

19th Aug

Went for a stroll up one of the hills at Pontypridd with Miah. After dinner we climbed up the highest point (Mt. Uggamugga or something, anyhow Father will know the place I mean) with Miah and Florrie. We could see right across the Bristol Channel with the aid of Miah's glasses, and the ruins of a large castle.

20th Aug.

I hired a motorcar and took Aunt Lizzie and Florrie to Barry via Llantwit Varda and St. Fagan's, coming back by another route. It was very hilly but very pretty all the way. We went to Uncle Robert and aunt Maggie's house and had tea there and I went for a stroll down to the pebbly beach with Uncle Robert. We got back to Ponty about 7.30 p.m., the trip taking in all about 5 hours.

We spent the rest of the evening at Mrs Porcher's house, which, as Father will remember, is next Ashfurlong, and had some music.

21st Aug.

Went by train about 10.30 a.m. with Florrie and Aunt Lizzie. Aunt L. went direct to Aberaman but Florrie and I got out at Mountain Ash and saw Miah at the Bank and then went up to the cemetery to see the grave of Grandpa and Grandma. We saw the colliery and house alongside it with the small windows where Father lived. I thought Mountain Ash a very

pretty little place but Florrie , Miah and Lizzie don't like it at all. We then got a taxi from Mountain Ash to Aberaman and joined Aunt Lizzie at Mr. Derham's house and had dinner there. These people are very nice and remember Father. Joe Derham took me round Aberaman Works, where Father put in his apprenticeship, I only met two hands remaining that knew Father (John Wilkins and George Usher). The works is half as big again now to what it was when Father was there. The adjacent colliery is still going strong under Powell's Duffryn Co.

Joe Derham took me by electric tram through the funny named town of Aberdare. There is a very fine park at Aberdare with a fine little lake and fountain. (I have sent you cards of this). Also sent cards of Mountain Ash but was unable to obtain views of Aberaman but Mrs Derham has promised to send me some. We returned to Pontypridd about 8 p.m. and I caught a train back to Paddington about 4 in the morning and got a free motor ride to the Imperial Hotel where I had a bit of sleep and met Harry Dinsdale again.

22nd Aug.

Went round to the Christian Science Reading Rooms to look up a Mr. Aarons there but found he was away on holidays. Also looked up Meluish's Aunt in Highgate Rd. but she was also out.

Went to Theodore & Co. at the Gaiety after tea. Four of us got a box there and it was a very funny show - sort of musical comedy.

Went to see Miss James for an hour or so.

Went by train to Hampton Court, had tea there and got back to Vauxhall Station about 10.30 p.m. We put up for the night near Victoria Station so as to be handy for catching the early morning train back again.

23rd Aug [No entry].

24th Aug.

Caught train very early and got back to H.Q. again about 9 a.m. next day.

I had a most enjoyable trip and the Pontypridd people could not have been kinder.

Yr lvg. son and brother

Bob.

No. 89.

FRANCE
6th September 1917

My dear All,

As I hadn't heard from Harold for some time, I went in search of him today & it involved me in a 26 mile trip 13 miles each way. I was lucky enough to get motor lorry rides each way.

I was very pleased to see him & we had a good feed of eggs together. He is going on leave to England tomorrow – so I nearly missed him. He says he intyends going to Scotland & Wales.

We have been having good times lately. There is a pipe organ in this village & I played it for an hour and a half yesterday. The Y.M.C.A. here also have a little cottage piano * we have bought several song-books between us so have a bit of a singsong show now & then.

Cheerio to all & plenty of love.

Yr lvg son & brother.

Bob.

No. 89 'a' (misnumbered?)

Somewhere in BELGIUM
13th September 1917.

My dear All,

I suppose by this time Harold's leave to England will be just about finished. I haven't heard from him since he went on Leave but as he intended going the day after I saw him I don't suppose anything turned up to keep him back.

You will be interested to hear that I have been working at Headquarters 1st ANZAC Corps for the last five days. They asked for a clerk & I was recommended. Keep on addressing my letters as usual because this new job may not be permanent, It is much more comfortable here than in the old job & you don't have to shift about nearly so much.

I told Uncle Robert that Father had built a new workshop & he wants to know what he is going to turn out – motor cars or aeroplanes?

The people around here are all busy picking the hops. The leaves are already beginning to fall from the trees so it looks like "Goodbye Summer".

Harold was looking very well when I saw him. We went into a farmhouse & had a feed of eggs together. It was about half past three then & I had had nothing to eat since breakfast so I actually ate 5 eggs – never tackled so many in my life before.

Am keeping fit & hope you all are the same. Tons of love.
Yr lvg son & brother Bob.

Somewhere in Belgium
28th Sept. 1917.

My dear Father,

Letters Nos 66 & 68 arrived this morning & tonight respectively. As usual I was very pleased to see the familiar writing on the envelopes. It is very nice of Frank talking of relieving Mr Adeney, but such a scheme as that you refer to seemed so wildly improbable over here that few believed it would ever materialise. Nevertheless, I will make a point of seeing Mr Adeney (if he happens still to be at 1st Div. Headquarters) & tell him of Frank's offer to "keep the bridge." If such an arrangement had been permissible, Frank would have been eminently suitable for the position seeing that he is a draftsman.

I note that you & Mother seldom go to the theatres etc. - Blessed are they which are content with their ain fireside. So you have added a "French" day to the already long list of Melbourne War Days. The Joan of Arc statue business sounds picturesque. - The Frnch dearly love a demonstration. ("Vous savez!" or rather, Tu sais!")

Will you please address all future letters as follows: "c/o 1st Anzac Corps Headquarters." I am working with the General Staff clerks but the above address is quite sufficient.

Yes I heard about the Naval Bridging Train being back in Australia. It certainly did surprise me. I borrowed a Flemish dictionary yesterday & have been amusing myself copying out a lot of words. The language is practically Dutch - very like English many of the words are - which explains why so many Flemings can speak English fluently. They say "Koffie" for "coffee" and "Myne moeder" for "my mother", "Kat" for "cat" etc., etc.

Fancy Frank earning the princely sum of £3 per week. When "le jour de gloire est arrivé" he'll have two returned soldier brothers sponging on him. I shall certainly expect to be shouted to the opera.

We have been having beautiful weather here for the month of September. There has been no appreciable coldness so far & the landscape still looks very pretty. I love the old mills & will certainly miss the quaintness which they lend to the surrounding country when I return to Australia. I paid a visit to my friends at 2nd DHQ this afternoon (it being my afternoon off after night duty). They have a nice piano in the room where they are at present billeted so they asked me to give them a tune as work happened to be a bit scarce. While playing, Capt. Wertheim came into the room & I had to play all the operatic things I could remember for him as he is very musical. His people are the Piano people. I think he is a jolly fine fellow.

Goodnight & tons of love
Bob.

92 (a)
6th October 1917

My dear Father,

I am pleased to hear that you are alright again after your couple of days of "malade."

There is a possibility of me getting four days leave to Paris one of these days and I am very eagerly looking forward to seeing this famous city. When I do go I will write and tell you a whole lot of stuff about it that you already knew. After visiting Paris I will be perfectly satisfied to stop wandering and return home. However, "I will arise" and etc. as soon as they bury the hatchet over here.

You will be amused to hear that I invested 2/6d in "Hugo's Italian in 3 months with pronunciation and without a Master." The troops must amuse themselves you know. As there seems to be so much money in the "Stak-a-de-oyst" business in Melbourne I might be able to set you up in a shop when I get back.

I take this opportunity of wishing you very many happy returns of the 21st December as it will be just about your birthday when this screed arrives. I am also sending you a magnificent present to wit a "brosse a dents" made in France. (I put it in French as it sounds rather commonplace in English). I hope the paltry thing turns up alright or it will be a case of "never put a gift brush in the mouth".

I have received a couple of letters from Harold since his return from leave. He seemed very pleased with the Hotel I recommended to him.

There is absolutely nothing (as the baby said) more to write about so I will wind up. I must leave some space to answer Frank's "goodday, gooddday, goodday".

Keep smiling - Think right

Your loving son

ROBERT OSWALD

Dear Brother Frank,

To tell the truth I never knew
There were letter writers such as you

With love

R. SNAPE

92 (c

8th October 1917

(Added in indelible pencil after the War: Hoograffe near Poperinghe, BELGIUM)

My dear All,

Letters Nos 69 and 70 put in a welcome appearance this morning, dated 11/13th August.

I was very interested in the photos. It was good of Margery to take them & I am enclosing a card thanking her.

Am not surprised to hear that I look thinner in the photo I sent. It is the continuous indoor war work I suppose. But still indoor war work is "much preferable" to outdoor war work I think, especially as winter is coming on again. Speaking of winter, we have had the first taste of it this week. The fine weather spell broke & has been replaced by cold rainy days. However, there seems to be no lack of stoves in the place as the orderlies have already got one going in the wooden hut where I work.

To return to the snapshots, I must admit that you all look very happy; tho' Frank looks rather vicious with the upraised hammer & chisel. I t looked as tho' you have built another small shed right in the corner of the yard. (Curse this paper: it's greasy).

Mother says I look sad & resigned in my photo. Well, I must admit that I feel quite resigned to my lot over here. it is the best way to feel when you are in the same position as Martin Luther when he proclaimed, "Here I stand. I can do no other. So help me God". However, I think that I'm a long way from feeling sad. I have learned how to amuse myself in a quiet manner such as reading, working out a little accounting problem; smoking & laboriously translating the serial story in the Paris "Matin" or trying to hum through the score of Lohengrin by sight. Simple pleasures it is true but what a lesson in patience. I have sent to a friend in London for a copy of Charles Lamb's Essays & Letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son.

Further pastimes which I have mapped out for myself to tide me over the winter are:- the purchase of a French edition of "La vie bohème" & comparing it with the libretto of the opera "La Bohème" in Italian & the study of "Faust" with English & French words.

It is a shame that some of the parcels have gone to the bottom of the briny but I don't quite like the idea of the suggestion of sending money to Aunt Lizzie to get things.

Don't be afraid about the war getting me down Mother. I'll pull through alright. I have not had to work very hard since coming to my new job, but I've got to be always on the job in case anything turns up. There is a bigger environment here.

Father says Letter No 79 was not so cheerful. Oh well, I can't say one thing and mean another. in the long run it's just as well to let you have a true statement of affairs as the accountants say. I note that you say the old name is still up in Collins St. tho' looking a bit dilapidated. Was pleased to get the 'Argus' & 'Herald' date 31st July also the chocolate. They dish up the war to you in a very dramatic style out there. I must say thou' that I prefer

the methods of 'The Times' and 'Morning Post,' Australian papers are interesting to read over here. I wouldn't mind getting a copy of the 'Essendon Gazette' now & then too.

Father's suggestion of a steam hammer to imitate war sounds is amusing though the report of a howitzer is something like it & is a rushing wind if you happen to be between the how. & its target.

Am glad to hear that you are going to persuade Frank to send over more photographs. We do like getting them. Take a snap of Miss McLaughlin (i.e. Madge, Bob's secret wife) if you get a chance, too. It certainly would have been delightful if Father could have taken a trip over here like Mr Rigby. I would give something to see any one of you right now.

The tax on bachelors in Australia sounds funny but still I think it a good wheeze all the same. You've got a big deficit to make up somehow.

I got a letter from Miah today enclosing views of Aberamou (in Wales) & surrounding collieries which Mrs Durham was kind enough to procure for me. I will send them home in a few days to add to the large collection. Father will no doubt be very interested with them.

A letter also came to hand from Uncle Robert (Snape) in which he said he had spent a couple of pleasant hours at Pontypridd where he went to see Harold. They were disappointed he did not go to Barry. Aunt Maggie is not getting any better & they have written to one of her nieces to come & nurse her & look after things. It is, I am afraid, very cheerless for Uncle Robert at present. He must be lonely. Bert is in Camp. (You know, I suppose, Christian Science still holds me in good stead).

Love to all.

Bob.

No 94

**Somewhere in Belgium
(Hoograffe, added after the war)
14 October 1917.**

My dear All,

I had the unexpected pleasure of receiving the other day a parcel that had been peregrinating round the world since 26.7.1917. it had gone to the Div. Ammunition Column, then Div. HQ & finally reached Anzac none the worse for its lengthy journey - save perhaps for a slight dent in the side of the box. So that you will remember the particular parcel I refer to, I will give you a description of its contents.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1 pr. socks	Mother's usual good work
1 pkg nibs	Mother's thoughtfulness manifested again (I am now able to use a pen with reasonable pleasure again)
1 pr. laces	Very handy too.
1 handkerchief	Always handy - or rather "nosy"
1 tin of tongues	A nice luxury. (Will send Auntie Ada a card thanking her)
mustard for do (ditto)	Mother again. (I don't know what a boy would do without a mother).

This afternoon I made a trip to Div. Hqm to see the fellows there. It was a trip of about five miles. It was a lovely afternoon & I managed to get a lorry. I had a Sgt for company who used to work on the Div. too. He now has a job as lithographer on a small machine we have. While there I met Harold who had been along to see me & had followed me up. It had meant a long trip for Harold altogether & I was very glad I didn't miss him as it was our first meeting since his return from Leave. He seems to have had a rattling good time. He described it all to me. (We sat together at a little table in a rather "umpty doo" little café to talk things over). He has some interesting photos too, but I don't know whether he will be permitted to send them home. He did more flitting about than I did - paying visits to Windsor & Brighton. He also saw Miss James (C.S. Practitioner) & was very glad he met her.

After an hour's yarn with Harold we had to part & return to our respective jobs.

Today the big tin box dated 23.7.17 arrived. Never was there such a parcel! You should have seen my face when I opened it. It's the best I've ever had & that's saying a lot. Who thought of the peanuts? What an original idea! They created quite a sensation when I handed them round here. I don't think any of us had seen peanuts for ages. The ginger nuts were fine too. You simply can't get sweet biscuits here so

Now you know. They simply leave the sugar right out. The grape nuts are also tres bons. I eat them dry. We have a stove going here every night so I will be able to turn out weird dishes with the cornina & condensed milk. The dates also a distinct novelty. Please take a kiss each for your goodness as I daresay you all helped in the packing thereof. The cocoa & dried milk as a "very good idea" too. I thought Mother was going to number the parcels but I haven't noticed any numbers on the last two.

You will say, "This letter is nothing but parcels." I'm now going to tell you about a parcel Uncle R. & Aunt M. Were again kind enough to send. It contained a large quantity of lovely dried fruit tart.

Oh, by the way, Harold showed me some magnificent photos of our dining & drawing rooms, taken by Frank. Frank will receive a couple of bombs from me if he doesn't send me some soon.

I trust you are all keeping well. I am splendid. Am very comfortable here – with a good fire in the stove if it gets cold.

I must take the opportunity of wishing you all the happiest Christmas possible. I am buying some h'chiefs to send to Mother but don't expect they will get away for a week.

With much love –

God bless you all!

Your loving son & brother,

Bob.

(100a)

France

19th December 1917

My dear Father,

A chap has just walked in here half boozed & said, "Oh well, it's a long war & a short life so I'm going to enjoy the war." Rather amusing sentiments, eh!

I have been pleased to receive quite a budget of letters from you recently. Glad to hear that you have a fair amount of work in hand. It is very kind of you to wish to put up with another winter in order to give us fine weather. Ce n'est pas possible, Monsieur! We have had our first really cold days this week which means that we have had over a month more fine weather this year as compared with last year. There is a big pond near by covered with ice & they are making a slide on it. It was originally part of a moat round an old château.

I have seen Harold twice in the last fortnight as he has been within 9 miles of us - I went to see him yesterday & he seems to be doing pretty well & keeping cheerful. He thought he would have been able to get leave to Paris but now he seems to be delayed again. We have received a parcel each from Florrie, containing a cake & a pudding. Another parcel has also come to hand from Uncle Robert. I hope the views of Paris arrive safely. I sent you quite a lot of them. I suppose they had Eiffel Tower & Trocadero lit up with thousands of lights when you were there. It must have had a fine effect. They make it pretty hot in some of the Paris restaurants if you don't know the ropes. The first day there we had dinner at a café on the corner of the Avenue Kleber. They had dinner 2 Francs marked up, but when they brought the bill round we found they had charged us ½ Fr. extra for bread & ½ Fr. for serviettes. We only fell in once like that though. A number of places had marked up, "English spoken," but when you got inside you found that no-one could speak a word. In two places I referred them to the notice on the window & was told, "Our English customers speak the English here."

I believe that A(?) Roberts is still in England at an Instructional School. He seems to have been there a long time now. I suppose Headberry is still running the famous "Electrical & Milling Branch."

Douglas (Snape, cousin) does not seem to have been getting on too well.

Harold has just come along to see me with the splendid news that he has been selected to attend an officers school in England and will be leaving France tomorrow morning. This will mean that he will remain in England for anything from four to seven months. I am delighted to think that he will be away from here during the whole winter. It is not so bad for me seeing that I have a pretty comfortable job. I hope my letter gets home first with the good news.

Am keeping well & hope you are the same. Will write to Frank next time.

Your loving son,

Bob.

No. 100 b

FRANCE
20 – XII - 17

My Dear Mother,

Your letter s up to No. 78 of 7th October have so far arrived. Thank Arthur for the soup & Auntie Em (Emily Cook) for the socks. I am expecting them to arrive any day. Thank you very much Mother Dear for Christmas Wishes, also the classy Christmas card.

I am very pleased to hear that you are so much better since going to Mrs Hayes. So Mother would be pleased if her two boys were home now! No more pleased than her two boys would be I can assure you Mother. You must excuse the patchiness of the writing in this letter as I am writing it in a rather awkward position in order to be as near the fire as possible to the fire (as usual). I'm pleased to notice that we don't seem to feel the cold any more than the Tommy birds who have been over this way all their lives. All appearances so far point to a mild winter this time.

The cutting from 'The Sentinel' I am sending you is about a lady who had Mrs Eddy's Hymns on the gramophone. Don't you think it would be nice to get a couple of these. Coombes ought to be able import them though I daresay it would take a long time – but would be worth waiting for. Have you heard anything of Frank Spencer or Maurice Platts or any of the others lately? I haven't. Two of teh Sheas are in the artillery. Tol said that Edgely Hulme had enlisted. I haven't seen Madge's brother Tom McLaughlin since last July. When I get time off I prefer to go and see my own brother. Kennedy wrote a couple of weeks ago asking if I could get away on leave to England with him but I told him he was just a couple of months late. He is still in the Transport.

21/12/17 Fancy this is the hundredth letter I have written since I left home. I hope you have kept the letters in an old box or somewhere as it will be very amusing for me to have a look through them when I get back & see what sort of a letter I wrote you two years ago. Still I suppose it's a bit of a nuisance keeping them. My letters have not been too regular lately. We are at present working two men short so I haven't much time - but these two men will be back again in a week or two.

Tons of love from your loving son,

Bob.

P.S. We are having a heavy hoar frost here the last day or two: everything is white & the wind shakes it off the trees like a light snowfall. The trees & fences look very pretty.

Bob.

Uncle R. Said he was pleased to hear of Father's promotion at the Otis. What was this? I don't think you referred to it in your letters. /