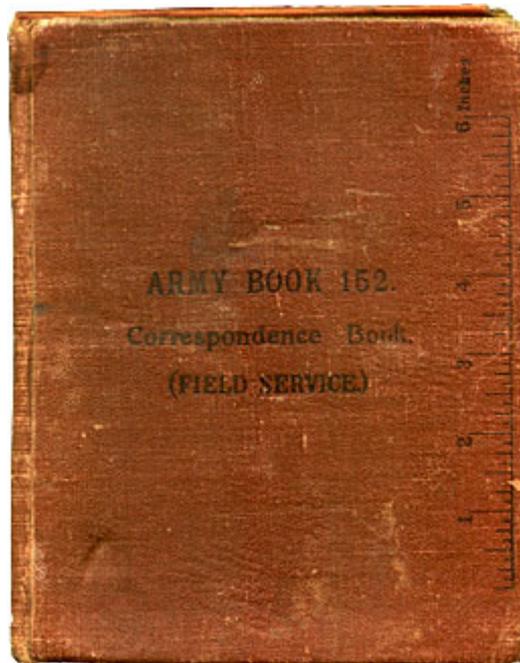


**Diary Four**  
*Dated from the*  
*2nd March 1916 to the 11th August 1916*



*Ralphs fourth diary, ARMY BOOK 152.*  
*Correspondence Book (FIELD SERVICE)*  
*Covering Egypt and the campaign in France (Western Front).*  
*Diary size - (Hard Cover) 16 x 20 cm.*

## **Tel-el Kebir Camp, Egypt**

*22nd March 1916*

Hur-bloomin-ray. Marching orders at last, and as pleased as a cat with two tails to get them. Just waiting for orders to entrain. Am heartily sick of this confounded Country, however remarkable it may be. Too many flies and niggers for my special palate and those two abortions combined are exactly 100% worse than Shrapnel or HE. This time I leave Egypt as a 'Blooming OFFICER'. Lieutenant R.D.D. of the Galloping Ninth, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division. Our CO is Colonel Burgess, OC Major Gee, and Randall and Faulkner. My old chum C.G.P. is with the Brigade, as Orderly Officer to the Colonel. Am feeling awfully fit, so look out somebody!

## **From Tel-el Kebir to Alexandria**

*23rd March 1916*

Left Tel-el Kebir at 1am this morning. Arrived at Alexandria at 7am. Had a ripping good sleep coming down. Travel 1st Class nowadays. Officer you know. Unloaded horses and gear in next to record time. Started embarking same at 10am, finished at 12.40pm. Been trying to get into the City but the CO won't hear of it. This time we go to France I believe. Nothing definite known as yet, but I really think that's where we'll bring up. At present on SS Nessian of the Leyland Line of boats. Have a dinky cabin amidships, sharing same with Major Gee and Faulkner. Chas is on board, only a couple of cabins away. Left Alex at 8pm. Picked up with a destroyer escort 10pm. Plenty of 'tin fish' around here. Select little beano with Captains McIndoe and Raymond, and Chas and Faulkner. Sea very calm and, many thanks to someone, the thermometer's down a few. Had a last look at Egypt. Hope it's not my lot to visit there again. Bunk at 12pm.



*Alexandria quay: allied troops preparations for embarkation (GWS)*

*24th March 1916*

Up at 6.30am and down in stables. Horses doing fine not one accident to any of them yet. Destroyer still with us. Food on board splendid and plenty of it with good old English Bass as an appetizer. Beats 'Brassiere des Pyramids' (Pyramids Brewery) into a cocked hat. In stables pretty well all day. Things looking rather clean and shipshape now. Give me Australians every time when there's work to be done. They are the very essence of 'Ginger'. This afternoon have been allotting boat stations to our Battery. Everything OK on board, with the exception of one duty and that is that you can't move a yard away from your cabin unless you've got a lifebelt on. Received a message

from our TBD Escort while at dinner, to the effect that an officer would board us after dark. Since then our course has been altered. Sea even smoother than yesterday, and temperature still normal.

#### *25th March 1916*

Up with the larks again this morning. Find that during the night we have picked up a few more transports. Our escort picked up some wreckage today. Haven't found out what it was. She left us at 12 o'clock. Went back to Alexandria. So at present we're on our own heading, I believe, for Malta. Expected to arrive there sometime during the next 30 hours. This afternoon it rained a bit and fog has been coming up for the last 6 hours. We also had several visitors today in the form of birds. Can't be very far away from land because our feathered friends are just ordinary house sparrows and wood-doves. Have developed an enormous appetite. Positively ravenous. Chas and I between us consume as much as 6 men would normally. Had a warm salt water bath today. I really think that civilisation is not quite extinct yet.

#### *26th March 1916*

Sunday, by all that's marvellous. Gee, the weeks do slip round nowadays. What's more, this proves to be a real wet one. Have been in the stables half the morning, and eating, and then pacing the boat deck with Chas the other half. Its a welcome change being at sea with just enough sun and wind to make the thermometer behave itself after months on the infernal sands of Egypt. (Ugh). Both my charges are doing A1. Phyllis recognises me every time I pass her, but Beauty is still dubious. Phyllis is a most expensive lady. Costs me a small fortune for lumps of sugar. This afternoon Chas and I were inoculated against Para-Typhoid. Feeling anything but cheerful. Considering the number of times I've been done, I really think that shrapnel won't hurt me now. The Doc has just been telling us how many millions of microbes are contained in one dose. I've just multiplied that by 7 and have come to the conclusion that I am really one big microbe.

#### *27th March 1916*

Passed Malta at 11 o'clock last night. Received orders there and at present we're obeying some by heading for Marseilles. The breeze has increased until it's blowing a tidy little gale but the rain has gone. Just been up on the boat deck enjoying things. Chas and I are both down to the inoculation. I've a head like 'the morning after the night before' stunt. Hardly left my cabin all afternoon. However, I've got one consolation. The Doc has been doped too, and he's a fraction worse than I am. Late this afternoon we passed quite close to the coast of Tunis. Rather mountainous country. Received a signal from the lighthouse. Passed a Greek steamer toward evening. We've averaged 11 ½ knots since leaving Egypt and would be in Marseilles now if our course had been the usual one. Tonight's glorious. Dead calm and beautifully cool.

#### *28th March 1916*

Ships Orderly Officer today. In charge of 40 men who compose the Submarine Guard. All the morning have been on the boat deck listening to the skippers funny stories. Under normal circumstances we should arrive at Marseilles tomorrow. Passed Sardinia this afternoon. Quite a large island and looks even more forbidding than Tunis. We should pass Corsica tonight. At present we are in the Gulf of Lyons, and know it too. This old tub has behaved rather well up to now, but the tidal roll here is upsetting her somewhat. The Major and Faulkner have been down to it. Passed a couple of boats towards evening. Just had a glorious bath. Don't know when we'll get a chance of another one.

### **Arrival in Marseilles harbour, and train trip to Le Harve**

#### *29th March 1916*

(Château d'If) My first glimpse of France at 7am. My first impression of same, is that it's uncommonly like NZ particularly the South Island. All morning has been spent scanning the coast in hopes of picking up Marseilles, and just now 10.30am we got our first glimpse of that city. Coming up the harbour (which is magnificent in the extreme), we passed the Tower from which the Count of Monte Cristo was thrown somewhere about the year 'umpteens'. Also passed a beautiful church perched away up on a hill. On the largest steeple of the church is a fine gilded statue which dazzles your eyes even though you're a few miles away. Tied up at the wharf at 12am. Disembarked at 4pm. Had dinner on the 'Nessian' and then walked to camp about 2 miles from the wharf. An absolute brute of a camp too. 2/5<sup>th</sup> under water. Chas, Faulkner and self managed to get up town for a few hours at night. Great beano and no questions.

### *30th March 1916*

Up with the sparrows this morn. Gee, its cold here. Woke up at about 2 am and thought the North Pole had shifted a bit. Awaiting orders to entrain for some unknown spot. Randall joined up with us again. The Major, Chas, Raymond, and self cruised over to a Hotel and had cafe au lait. For dinner we got into a Restaurant which was unmistakably German. (Pirated). Exercised horses in the afternoon. No leave granted. Anyhow at 7 pm we called a muster and found that 100 men of our particular Bty had sealed out. No orders for shifting yet. Believe we go north from here, a 5-hours train journey via Paris. Learning to talk French like a Parrot.

### *31st March 1916*

Three fifths of the Bty up before the beek. Chas and I went on leave at 3.30 pm. Struck some English people in a Restaurant and received an invitation to go out to their place tomorrow night for a ball. Great beano at night. Picked up Randall at 6.30 and also struck H. Hobbs and Parks. Had dinner at Coif' Maud. Glorious evening.

### *1st April 1916*

Arrived in Camp at 06.30. Exercising most of the day. At night Chas and myself had our best night for quite 18 months. Visited the Home of Mr Beckell, Villa Virginia, No 8 Rue Marie Currie. Had a most enjoyable evening and met real English people there. Appreciated it incredibly. Danced and talked up till about 2.30 am and then got back to camp.

### *2nd April 1916*

Sunday again, and most enjoyable. Quiet day in Camp. Chas and myself got leave and went to keep an appointment with one of the many English friends we met last evening. Met the party at 2 pm and went out to their place and played tennis all afternoon. Managed to strike form at once and gave a fairly good account of myself. Big beano at night. Ask us who 'Maude' is. Wouldn't mind a month here. Got home at 06.15

### *3rd April 1916*

Randall, Chas and myself left camp at 10 am and visited friends in the City. Went out to lunch then got a motor launch and saw Marseilles from the water front. Got back to the wharf at 5 pm. Reported to camp and had dinner at 8. Another beano. Who's Puppett.

### *4 April 1916*

Out exercising horses all morning. Went out into an outskirts of the City. The houses are real palaces and nearly every one has magnificent grounds. Slept during the afternoon. Went into the City at 8 pm in charge of a Patrol of 28 men and 4 NCOs. Had a great time. 'Supper' with A.P.M. Got back to camp at 12 pm. Great City believe me.

### *5th April 1916*

On leave from 10 am with Chas. Went by train and visited No 7 Hangar Ordinance Depot. Met one of the chaps who was at Tennis last Sunday and went to afternoon tea with him. Dinner at Le Novelty Bar. Lost Chas? Very early to bed 11 pm The earliest since arriving in Marseilles.

### *6th April 1916*

Raining like Mad. Got orders at 10.30. Packed and left Camp Fournier at 7 pm. Entrained at 9.30. Visited Maude, and had dinner at her place. Picked Randall up there then accompanied by Lula and Maude we travelled to the station. Left there at 11.15 pm. Up to our knees in mud. Awful sorry to leave.

### *7th April 1916*

Our first stop at Orange after travelling all night. Stopped at Marcon at 2.15. This is a lovely trip. The Major, Chas and self in a very cosy sleeping car. Travelling through magnificent country. Stopped briefly and fed horses at night. Managed to supplement ourselves. Champagne etc. Slept like a log all night.

### *8th April 1916*

Travelling all day. Gee, this France is beautiful. Passed through the Champagne District this afternoon. Chas being in charge of the commissariat Department procured drinkables and cooked pheasant. Passed Paris about 3.30 but did not see much of the city. Went round through the outskirts. This country is the most beautiful I've yet seen. On the whole it seems to be one big beautiful garden. Everywhere the troops either travelling or massing on the railway stations, or doing sentry on roads, bridges or railways. Every station we've been through we've been cheered and farewells waved from everywhere. The French people seem to be very much attracted to our boys and they likewise

to them. Expect to reach our destination (Le Havre) early tomorrow morning. Bitterly cold tonight. Early to bunk.



*As a troop train carrying Australian soldiers from Marseilles to Le Havre makes a rest stop, the soldiers have disembarked to stretch their legs on the tracks beside the train, rest on the embankment (right) or pick wildflowers to decorate the train carriages.*

### **Le Havre**

*9th April 1916*

Arrived at Havre at 2 pm today. Cold, that's flattering it. Great station here. Must be about 400 yards long. Fell out and detrained horses and stores. Left the station at 5 am and walked 6½ miles to camp. No 2 (Sanvic). There are quite a number of batteries waiting here. Amongst them are several of my old chums from the 1st Bde. Working like a nigger all day. Getting lines down and picketing horses and a hundred and one other things which behave a Bty Orderly Officer. Chas and myself went into the City for dinner about 7 o'clock. Give me Marseilles before this City. Although this is rather pretty and well laid out; Marseilles for preference every time. Hunted all round the place in hopes of getting a bath but our luck must have been out. The City is full of troops representing all the Allies. At the Hotel where we dined were several Belgian and French officers in unlimited quantities.

*10th April 1916*

Randall and the Major at ordinance all day seeing to our guns, waggons and general equipment. Quite a pleasant day today. More like the South of France. Had a view of a French dirigible in flight. Came round over our lines. Randall, Chas, and self went into town tonight, after the same old complaints, a bath and dinner. Got the latter but again missed the former. Went to a music-hall later. Ask Chas? Cold as Charity tonight.

*11th April 1916*

Raining like mad. Went into ordinance this morning at 8.30 to draw our guns etc. Got back to camp at 1.30. Had to bring the Battery and B.A.C. out myself. Worked it out by algebra and a few other things. Got wet through of course. We have a great mess room here. In reality is a hay loft converted. Anyhow it can boast a stove, which make's up for a lot of things.

*12th April 1916*

BOO today. Been out in the rain all day. Busy equipping etc. Mud up to your knees. Still, I'd sooner that than sand. Packed up this afternoon. Believe we leave here within the next 36 hours. Hope so.

*13th April 1916*

Weather a slight improvement, no rain, but blowing a cold gale. 1st Brigade arrived last night. Joined up with us this morning. Went into the City this morning for a bath. Got it. Marching orders to hand. Left camp at 5.30 pm and got down to entraining station at 4. Started entraining at 7.30 finished at a quarter to nine. Randall a I went into the City and had dinner, then came back and had supper with the major and RTO. Left Le Havre at 10 pm. Got a cosy compartment.



*A view of the village of Borre, in Northern France, showing the church in the centre, and the house to the right which was used as 1st Brigade Headquarters.*

*14th April 1916*

Travelling all night and still at it. Pulled up at Auzéville-en-Argonne at 7.30. Watered and fed the horses. Struck 2 carriages of Australian nurses on a side line, who are going to work near the firing line. We are now in the War Zone. Every cottage along the line is a billet for troops. Everywhere are French soldiers, a great number of them working in the fields with the crops. Arrived at our destination Borre and packed 8 mules along a road knee deep in mud. Left the station at 8 pm and got out to our billet at 10.30. We are quartered in a French farmhouse, from which the sound of the guns are quite audible, and all night long the sky is brightened by their flashes. The room where I am writing this was once the HQ of some German troops who were quartered here. The daughter of the house speaks English and she has been telling us of the fighting which took place about here after Mons. Bitterly cold and raining.

*15th April 1916*

Got to bed sometime this morning. Slept the sleep of the just. In a bed too. Our boys are quite comfortably quartered on a barn feet deep in snow while the 4 dorgs have beds and bedrooms. This is undoubtedly the coldest thing I've yet struck. This morning it snowed and to cap the lot there's a knife-like gale blowing at about 40 knots per hour; which tickles you up some believe me. Raining most of the day, snowing the rest. Towards evening the wind abated and it stopped snowing and many other things, in fact it behaved itself so well that 2 Taubes came over and attacked our stationary observing balloon. Our planes went up and there was skin and hair flying. The Taubes dropped several bombs which were ineffective while our anti-aircraft guns made the sky hideous with puff of shrapnel. The Taubes soon tired however and escaped in a mist. Give us quite an appetite for dinner. Living like a fighting cock and feeling awfully fit and well.

*16th April 1916*

Glorious day today. It can be fine here sometimes. Went out on Beauty today. Glorious riding about the country lanes. All night long our "heavies" have been pasting things up-ahead. One continual roar of artillery all night. Received two letters from Annie today. By the way, I wrote to several people I used to know, last evening. Home, Horsie, "Undoona" Kream, and 48 M.R. Chas came along from H.Q. today. Faulkner dug up a farmhouse where you can get Champagne for 5 Francs a bottle. Of course we didn't spend any Francs. Orders to hand tonight for the

Major. Myself with 30 men to go into the firing line tomorrow. Have been getting maps and gen prepared in readiness to move off. Look out somebody.

### **Onto the Firing Line**

*17th April 1916 (Pailly our la Lys)*

Raining like charity. Left Borre at 10 a.m. Boarded a motor transport with 7 others set out the 12 mile ride to the firing line. Got here about 12 a.m. after the "muddiest" and "jolliest" ride I've had and I've been for quite a few. Its just like being at war again here. Something that I used to be quite used to once upon a time. At present the Major and I are quartered in some French homestead just about 1000 yds from the Bty position. Believe we take over tomorrow. Randall and Faulkner are behind in Borre while we are here with 4 complete gun detachments. Met two genuine Aus. Officers who have been trying to break their respective necks to make us comfortable. Our "heavies" have just been having an evenings hate with somebody up ahead using 9.2 and 6 in. howitzers. My batman [officer's assistant] was kind enough to lose my bed and clothing today so here's for a cold night.

*18th April 1916*

Sundry "hates" all day. Spent a most enjoyable night last night I don't think. Almost froze. Managed to "thaw" about 8 a.m. today. The Major and I reported to 2nd Div B.H.Q. at 10.30 and met and had lunch with an old acquaintance Col. Loyde who used to be Adj. 1st F.A. Bde. Had a long yarn to him about Helles while settling in his cosy quarters. We had to ride up from here, don't think we could have walked it. Mud's too thick. Had lunch with Major Williams and Lt. McPherson of the 15th Bty. We take over from them tomorrow. In the afternoon went up to the gun position and got the "hang" of things there. Boarded a horse and got back here again at 4.30. Gee this is a wet, cold show. Rain, mud everywhere and gee isn't it hot? Our friends are playing rather an expensive game just now. They're firing combustible shells at our billets and setting fire to the same. Jove, but their artillery are accurate. Never seem to miss. The owner of the house we are at present quartered in, was taken prisoner by the Germans last Sept, 12 months. All this place was in German hands.

*19th April 1916*

Rec. orders from the Major to report at once. The 15th Bty kindly supplied me with a horse which, if everything in this world was in its proper place, would figure in a wild west buck jumping show. Had a most amusing ride. The orderly with me turned out to be a chap Hollis that I dined with at the show ground in Sydney just prior to leaving Aus. Reported to the Major and 'ate' first of all. Spent the afternoon cruising about the trenches with Major Williams and Capt. Morris. Visited our OP. Two are in ruined houses and one up a tree. On our way round noticed plenty of "houses" which must have looked very pretty once least say so now. The trenches are thick with mud and if you chance to slip off the boards you will have a bath in at least 2 ft of water. Sundry artillery duels the order of the day with machine guns chipping in at night. Morris and I managed to get hold of a bottle of Cham tonight. Great night cap in this climate.

*20th April 1916*

Still raining. This morning the Major and I overslept our respective selves. Must have been the lobsters. Studying maps etc. all morning. This afternoon Capt. Morris and myself went up to the trenches with the idea of visiting our OP. Just got up near there and discovered that our friends were making a nuisance of themselves by shelling it like blazes, so just made ourselves comfortable and watched them. They sent over about 150 shells from 77 mm 4.2 to 5.9 H.E. Made an awful mess of it. Tomorrow we have got to go and look for another one somewhere. Visited the 13th Battery later. This particular Bty has been shelled out twice within the last few days. There are about 100 shell-holes around their last position. They're regular dorgs these Huns when they get going. Machine guns busy on our own sector. Heavy firing towards Armentieres.

### **Return to Borre**

*21st April 1916*

This morning got orders to go back to Borre on duty. Left base at 9.30 walked to Outtersteene (about 6 miles), boarded a goods train and got out at Hazebrouck and walked from there to Borre. Saw Chas who is looking anything but well. Left on the return journey in the midst of pouring rain at 4.30. Rode Phyllis down to the station. Boarded a passenger train at 6.30 and arrived in Steenwerck at 7.15. Got hold of some Tomey Ambulance Sergt and

after Sunday drinks bribed him into getting a motor waggon and running me part of the way home. Got home at 10 pm wet through.

*22nd April 1916*

Ordered to go with the Adjutant to get the rest of our Bty billeted in Gestaves. Raining like old nick. Got a horse from the 15 Bty and "used it". Billeted the  
Ordered to go with the Adjutant to get the rest of our Bty billeted in Gestaves.

*23rd April 1916 (Easter Sunday)*

Up with the larks this morning. The Major and self went up to the OP. and watched a bit of "hate" on our friends trenches. Afterwards, not to be done out of any fun they opened on to ours, and we got the "overs". Tons of aeroplane scraps during the day. A plane has hardly time to get up nowadays before it's got about 30 or 40 shrapnel and stie puffs around it. We brought down one of theirs yesterday and today they equalised the score by winging one of ours. This afternoon Major and myself rode into Le Pailly after pay and a few other things. Successful thank heaven. Got back at 5.30pm. At present am up at Kalallin at 2. G.A.O. for the 14 and 15 Btys. Had quite a pleasant time this evening so far. At present there's a Rosch M.G. making a fine target of this old house. Awfully interfering "cuss". Doing no earthly good but riddling the tiles on the roof, making an awful dust. The first really fine day since I've been in France.

*24th April 1916 (Easter Monday)*

Another fine day. Ye gods. Got down to the pay Bty at 8.30 had breakfast and look over my guns and store from the 15th Bty and put my own gun's crews on them. This afternoon located a new OP. and spent several hours mapping out a scheme whereby we can make it habitable. Its in an old ruined farmhouse about 300 yds in rear of our first line trench and its shelled out of all recognition of a house. This afternoon we had our first "hate". Stuck in about a dozen rounds for luck. Our anti-aircraft guns brought down a Taube today. Sunday artillery duels the order of the day otherwise quiet. Its just 12 months back when we were all anxiously waiting for our first scrap, and here now after one year of scrapping we are considered quite veteran soldiers.

*25th April 1916 (Anzac Day)*

Just 12 months ago today since I had my first baptism of fire at sea. Was on board the S.S. Indian then lying off Anzac waiting to land. Another glorious day today. This morning had to go to Bac St Maurit to locate a temporary waggon line for our Battery. Did so. Was also out after the Field Cashier, missed him but found Chas who had just come out of Hospital, and was looking for H.Q. Had dinner together at our billet, and then went up to our OP. and took over from MacPherson of the 15th Bty. Sundry artillery "hates". We fired on one battery and shut them up with 16 rounds. Came down to our billet at 6.30. Chas came to dinner. Cracked a bottle with the Major and Chas to celebrate the "Day" and came up here to Battalion H.Q. Thank someone I am not 6 ft long.

*26th April 1916*

Left Batt H.Q. at something to 7. Got to David House and had breakfast. Afterwards went up to our forward OP. Was employed making ourselves comfortable when our friends started throwing 5.9s into us so we had to get out. They fired 60 rounds into it and then shut up. Blew things about a bit but I can still use it as an OP. Got back to the Bty on being relieved by the Major and went down to Bue Sis-nair and guided the Bty into their new W.L. Got back to the Bty at 9.30. Coming home "they" threw some of their gas shells about. This gas makes your eyes water and smart like one thing. The appearance of my eyes this morning was such as would suggest that I had a glorious beano, or night out. Orders through that Randall has been transferred from our Bty. Our next officer is Lt. Richardson from the 7th.

*27th April 1916*

Glorious day again. Been working like a nigger all day. Down at the waggon line all the morning straightening things out. Up at the Bty all afternoon. Missed a trip to England today by just a hairs-breadth. Anyhow that will keep. Faulkner came up today which relieves me somewhat. Tonight Chas, Adj. and CO had just finished a little "stunt" and were just preparing for bunk when we got the SOS signal from the front line, signalling gas attack. Donned our gas helmet and got into action in no time and strafed for an hour and a half. Have just come in from our stint. The wind has changed so I reckon "they" will have to don their gas bags. Everything perfectly quiet save for an occasional burst of machine gun fire. Had a bath.

*28th April 1916*

Chas and myself went for a short cruise this morning around Fleurbaix. Found something. Down at waggon line in the afternoon checking gun stores etc. Have to take my two guns somewhere near Armentieres tonight. Left W.L. at 7 got to 12<sup>th</sup> Bty position when we had a gas attack signalled. Turned out to be only a scare. Picked up an officer of the 12<sup>th</sup> who guided us to our rendezvous where I handed over guns etc. Got back to Fleurbaix at 11.45 p.m. Got two letters. My mail has gone mad and got lost somewhere.



*Fleurbaix battle front*

*29th April 1916*

Up at OP. all morning, but not in it all the time. Got shelled out of the forward OP. so went back to the reserve D.O (dug out) and got shelled out of that. So spent a comfortable 2 hours peaking about the trenches while "they" carried on and amused themselves. My Sergt Brown and self nearly got buried by the roof and a few beams, I don't mind how many shells they throw about, but I bar sand bags. Reported to Batt H.Q. tonight.

*30th April 1916*

Got down to the Bty from B.H.Q. at 9 a.m. Have been working like a nigger all day. Visited waggon line this afternoon. Tonight at 7 p.m. "they" opened up on one of our heavy batteries and pushed out about 50 5.9s. Made an awful mess of things but didn't get the guns. Last night "they" made an attack north of Armentieres preceded by a gas stunt but gained nothing. Artillery hates all day.

*1st May 1916*

Up at OP. all day. Strange as it may seem, its true that we never got a shell at us today. An occasional artillery hate and rather good target practise made at aeroplanes, but apart from that nothing much doing. At night we got the gas signal. Pumped in a few rounds, but found out finally it was a false alarm.

*2nd May 1916*

Glorious day. My turn at the Bty today. Had to go down to the waggon line this morning. This afternoon had two hates of 20 rounds each. The Major controlled the first one, but got blown out of his OP. station 5 minutes before the second one started, so I carried on. Nothing much doing barring a few more farmhouses being strafed. Wrote M and Mr Blikeli tonight.

*3rd May 1916*

Spent the morning looking for a new OP. old blown out again. At present am observing from a tree about 900 yds in rear of our first line. Got a temporary station at the 24th OP. Up at Batt H.Q. at night.

*4th May 1916*

Down at the Battery all day. At 11 a.m. I got word to fire on a target that a scouting aeroplane sent down. Got into action immediately and got a hit with the third round. Put in about a dozen more for luck. Aeroplane report to hand says effective shoot. Same believe me. At night the Colonel, Chas and Morris visited our billet. We had a phonograph records and Champagne so had an awfully jolly night.

*5th May 1916*

Just going to bed after a glorious little 'hate'. Have been up forward observing all day. Our friends ranged on to pretty well every trench in the 24th and our own sections. Thought there would be something doing tonight, and there was. Had just dined, and was having a little bit of music, when someone let hell loose on our sector. Our friends concentrated all their available artillery on us and gee wizz, didn't he knock it in. We've just finished firing. Everything is quite normal again but for two hours it was like old Helles again. Our boys stuck it well. Trust the 1st AIF for that, although for every shell we loosed off, they sent 7 back at us. Were expecting a repetition early tomorrow morning. Hope they come, because we've got such a painful surprise awaiting them.

*6th May 1916*

Our friends evidently thought better of it and didn't try any more funny business this morning. Rather a disappointment for us because we had several painful surprises up our sleeves but they'll keep. Got more than he expected I fancy. All our chaps wanted to rush his trenches., but unfortunately orders are orders. Up at OP. all day. Had a couple of visits around the trenches. In one small sector they got over 400 shells into it. Got down to the Battery at 7 p.m. Had a visit from Chas. Everything O.K.

*7th May 1916*

Down at the Battery all day. Sundry little hates the order of things but nothing much. Busy fixing up night lines of fire for our guns. Expect to start registering tomorrow.

*8th May 1916*

Up at OP. all day. Bitterly cold, in fact it has been hailing most of the day. Started registering this afternoon. Had my first experience of controlling fire from OP. Registered my own which the Major persists in naming after me (Doughty's Road). 10.15 a.m. Just sitting in my dug out writing this. Expecting trouble. To the right someone's lifted the lid of Hell and they're playing the Devil. Its as light as day with the flares and gun flashes. Glorious night for a scrap, nice and chilly, and dead calm, so come on dears, do. Saw Randall tonight.

*9th May 1916*

Although expected something last night was disappointed. Nothing doing. Turned out to be a bit of a midnight "hate". Down at the Battery up till 6 p.m. During the afternoon had a decent little "hate". Reported to Batt H.Q. at night. Raining like old Nick. Had a most pleasant evening with Col. Bennett. It rages and other officers of the good old 6th. Quiet night.

*10th May 1916*

Up at OP. today. Nothing doing in the morning, but in the afternoon the Major and I had a little "hate" on our own. Their 5.9s opened on the old OP. and sent over 60 at it. Gee, its in a mess. We were up a tree observing during our little hate and was paid particular attention by one of their snipers. Awfully cheeky chap, but a rotten shot. Glorious evening.

*11th May 1916*

Down at the Battery all day. Consistent shelling by the enemy of sundry points of our sector. We had a nice little hate this morning and also a sortie this afternoon. "Strafed" a house or two which happened to be occupied also "stroked" a working party or six. Fritz scored one hit today. Brought down one of our "planes" not very far from our position. This evening he nearly got another. Real hard luck he didn't. The shooting warranted it. Saw Chas tonight. Went into Fluerbaix and teased some French girls. The most innocent bit of fun we've had for a long time. Major, Chas and I had a Fizz Supper. Glorious war this.

*12th May 1916*

Up at OP. all day. Had a "dig" at a working party on my road. Caught a few. Sundry shelling on both sides. Ran No 4 out tonight. Took her up about 1400 yds. 8th Batt turned out in force to help.

*13th May 1916*

Down at the Battery all day. Raining like Hell. Suture on has by M.O. 2nd Bde. Done a bit of strafing later on in the afternoon. Went up to Batt H.Q. for dinner with Rogers. Had a most enjoyable time up there. Tea and toast at 11.30 p.m. Quiet night up ahead but quite a noise up Armentieres way.

*14th May 1916*

Up at OP. again. Cold as charity. Quiet morning, but "they" started hideous noises during the afternoon, so gave them something back and shut them up after a few rounds. Got a few direct hits on Maisach Church and house alongside of it with our mobile gun. Bde orders tonight contain a list of officers leave. Wonders never cease. Fancy giving officers to the 1st Art. Div. Leave. Rotten part about it is that Chas goes early next month while I get away on the 23rd.



*Australian 18lb battery gun stuck in Flanders Mud*

*15th May 1916*

Down at the Battery all day. Still raining and this Flanders mud is so affectionate. Had a bit of a "strafe" this morning and got something. Lt. Robertson reported for duty to our Battery. The Major insists on it that I go down to the waggon line for a few days spell, and as its an order I go down tomorrow morning. Nothing much doing.

*16th May 1916*

W.L. Arrived here at 10 a.m. this morning. A little quieter than the Battery, but still within range of their "heavies". Its great here. Everywhere along the road and in Bai St Maurit are little restaurants owned and run by French people where they sell refreshments and a little bit of everything. Both my charges are fine. Haven't had a chance to ride either of them yet. O.C. Waggon Line has too much to do. 8th Battery got their share of "strafe" today. Its going up. 7th first, 8th second, 9th (our turn next).

*17th May 1916*

Glorious day. Aeroplane duels the order of the morning. Their heavies making hideous noises during the afternoon. Tonight we had to "stand to" on account of receiving a Gas Alarm. The sector attacked is South of us and at present

9 p.m. there is an extra heavy bombardment down that way. Got a letter from Annie today. Gee my mails gone mad. Haven't had a letter for years I think.

*18th May 1916*

Glorious day again. Aeroplane stunts as usual. Still at Waggon Line and having a deuce of a time. Great night tonight. At the invitation of Madame Grace (our billet proprietess), young ladies of Flanders come over to entertain us. Sang French songs (in the English version mostly) until I was quite hoarse. One of the visitors was a Belgian girl whose father was killed early in the fighting. Aeroplane squadron after, gone at midnight tonight.

*19th May 1916*

Major came down today bringing with him good tidings. First of all that we're expecting a real good rough up shortly. And that I can get up to the Battery in a day or so. Mail arrived, but mine "nonest". Wrote Annie. Got shelled this evening. Don't exactly know if they were after us or an observation balloon which was up close to us. Anyhow they didn't get either. Very heavy bombardment down toward Neuve Chapelle.

*20th May 1916*

Glorious day again. Sundry artillery "strafes" and aeroplane "stunts". This afternoon Chas came down to dinner. Randall also blew in and had a "cup of tea". Big mail arrived last night. Mine still nonest. Nothing much doing.

*21st May 1916*

A few small hates and aeroplane stunts the order of things. Getting quite hot here. Our friends shelled a portion of Fluerbaix today, but did practically no damage owing to faulty ammunition. Visited Bte 8 H.Q. tonight. Rode up on Phillis. Chas came back with me. Had quite a nice little evening with the aid of three "mademoiselles" and cham. Glorious news tonight. Am going up to the Battery Tuesday morning.

*22nd May 1916*

Constant strafing all day long by both sides. Still quiet down here until this evening when they ranged on to the road about 6000 yds away from our stables. Thought we would have to "runski" but they soon tired. Put over about 50 shells but didn't do much damage. Chas down tonight. MacIndo, Moody, Chas and I had "a night assisted by the aforementioned mademoiselles.

*23rd May 1916*

General Hobbs inspected our W.L. this morning. Had a great turn out. Complimented on it in fact. Quite a "dorg" believe me. Reported to the Battery at 8 p.m. and ordered to go and report to Battalion H.Q. at once. They expected a "strafe" this evening, but it didn't come off. At present we have 3 officers and 30 men from the 6th Bty quartered with us. They relieve us when we go out for our spell about the 30th of this month.

*24th May 1916*

Great day. Got down to the Bty at 7.30 a.m. and just going to have a bath and a few other things when we got into action and strafed at the same time. "They" set one of our billets on fire and strafed the road rather prettily. Anyhow we had a rather hot half hours hate and then knocked off for dinner. This afternoon I was sent up to OP. and had a few "pots" and started a war with some of their Batteries. Located one of them and strafed it properly. Shut them up in rather quick time with No. 4. Chas came up to see me, so we had a war on our own.

*25th May 1916*

Up at the OP. again this morning. Started another row with our friends. Gave poor old Le Maisnil a few and pasted the cross roads rather well. No 4 seems to have got them thinking. Can't locate her anyhow. Had an accident with her in the afternoon and had to get new springs into the buffer. Have been "strafing" a good deal with her of late. Beano at the billet tonight.

*26th May 1916*

A glorious little war today. Went up to OP. this morning and strafed all and sundry. Major came up later on and our joint ambitions and doings set things going. Have become quite an expert on knocking houses about. Real top hole on the roofs. Went down and paid the lads at the Waggon Line this evening and came back and done likewise the Battery. During my absence "they" strafed our billet, Battery and No 4. I am (27) Just came back from running No 4 into a new position. Too hot over in the old one.

*27th May 1916*

Went up and plotted out a new zero line for No 4 this morning and spent two or three hours giving somebody up ahead the benefit of all doubts. Down at the Bty all afternoon getting things ready to hand over to the 6th Bty. Sundry hates the order of the day. Tonight one of our aeroplanes went for a trip over the enemy's lines and caused quite a stir. Must have had 400 shells at it, but it managed to evade all of them.

*28th May 1916*

Getting ready to hand over the 6th most of the day. With Chas, visited the 2nd Bty and saw some of the old boys. Had dinner with Capt. Olding, Regg Morris. Got home at 8 p.m. Something tells me there's going to be dirty work about tonight. Later just had a champagne supper with Major, Chas, Faulkner, Robertson and 4 officers from the 6th. Bunk at 11.30.

*29th May 1916*

No rest for the wicked. Behold in me the "wicked". Got an urgent this morning at 2 a.m. and have been supplying the Huns "urgently" since. Got into a beautiful little "strafe" and started quite a small war on our own. I think we won on points because they "ceased fire" first. This afternoon Lt. Duffy and myself rode via Saily-sur-la-Lys to our new waggon line where we are to "spell". Fixed things up for our arrival. Went into Estaires and had dinner, and a little diversion from being shelled. Got home about midnight after the darkest ride I've ever had. Had to take our bearings by the light of the German flares. Raining.



*Street and church interior of Estaires*

*30th May 1916*

Busy getting ready for our move all morning. Handed over to 6th at 5pm. Left Fluerbaix at 7. Walked down to W.L. Bac Saint-Maur and left there at 9.15. At 8.30 our friend opened up played the Devil. Thought we would have had to go back and strafe but was disappointed. Arrived at our new W.L. at 11.15. Lovely ride. Am getting to know my way about Flanders.

*31st May 1916*

Quite settled down in our new billet which happens to be a rather big farmhouse. This place also was used by Uplans early in the war for a H.Q. The father of the family at present living here was shot in his own garden. The morning taken up with getting things straight. This afternoon Chas myself rode into Estaires. Had a pleasant afternoon. Struck an English Leiuat in there, and he showed us around. Walked back and got it doing so. Arrived home at 11 p.m.

*1st June 1916*

Rode into Estaires with Robertson today. Bought several things for the mess. Saw our English friend again. On arriving home the Major informed me that his leave has been stopped. Quite hard luck as he was looking forward to getting away the day after tomorrow. Richardson takes his place. Chas goes on Sunday night. Very heavy bombardment over Laventie way tonight.

*2nd June 1916*

Glorious day. Orderly Officer today. Went out exercising this morning and had to stay in camp the rest of the day. Something unusual occurred tonight. Got a letter. Chas visited us tonight. Wildly excited about his approaching leave. Wish it would be kind to use once in a while and let us both get away together. Never mind mine comes 20 days after tomorrow. Considerable strafing going on up ahead although we don't hear much of it down here except the dull roar of the guns. Would sooner be up into it again though. Gets awfully monotonous down here. Anyhow will be up amongst it tomorrow. The Major and myself are going up to pick out new gun positions if fine.

*3rd June 1916*

Glorious day. The Major and I left here at 9 a.m. this morning and went looking for reserve positions. Visited the old 2nd Bty in the course of our wanderings and had morning tea with Captains Olding and Sandford. Saw some of the old boys again. Got into Estaires about 2.30 p.m. and had dinner at the Hotel De Ville. Visited our English officer friend and had the rest of the afternoon with him. Managed to get on to my base kit today. Not before I wanted it either as I've been going about in rags for the last month. Richardson leaves here tonight for his furlough. Chas was in a great state of excitement because he leaves here tomorrow night. General Hobbs visited us today. I've had about 6 hours in the saddle today and am as stiff as a poker.

*4th June 1916*

Had a visit from Generals Hobbs and Birdwood today. Chas came along and had dinner at night and left for England afterwards. Very heavy bombardment on right Group all night. Expected a call but none came.

*5th June 1916*

Orderly "dorg" all day. Went out exercising this morning and got caught in a heavy shower so had a ripping gallop home. Nothing very interesting here. Wish we were in position.

*6th June 1916*

Raining like old nick. Cleaned up towards evening so got on Phillis and went and saw Capt. Raymond (RAC). Had a lovely ride. Brigade orders out tonight bring rotten news re leave. Lord only knows when I get to England now. Just feel like getting up to the OP. and starting a war. Major got a late call last night. Glorious night.

*7th June 1916*

Took the Battery for a 10 mile route march this morning. Thoroughly enjoyed it. This afternoon Faulkner, Raymond, myself went on to Estaires for a little diversion. Had it. Mrs McKeon and the 4 of us went and had dinner at the Hotel De Ville. Glorious ride home.

*8th June 1916*

Kicking about the Bty all day. Randall paid us a surprise visit bringing with him the news that he was just going on furlough. Morris Fame had dinner with us. Sent the Major into Estaires with the Colonel. Handed over one of my guns to 6th Bty. Raining like old nick.

*9th June 1916*

Visit from Raymond this morning. Exercised horses and served my county well by getting waggons and guns cleaned ready for handing over. Sent for by the Colonel and told to report with Faulkner and 6 O.R. to 2nd Bty gun position. Left Waggon Line at rest billets at 8 p.m. arrived 9 p.m. Reported to Capt. Olding so here we are arranging to take over position and guns. Billeted in a farmhouse just about 40 yards away from the guns.

*10th June 1916*

Too misty today for any observation work so went down to the waggon line of the 2nd Battery. This afternoon we had a nice little strafe. Fired about 200 rounds on to their first line. They replied rather feebly.

*11th June 1916*

Sunday again. Went down to report to the Major who is acting Colonel at present. Stayed to dinner and had a "small" gram afternoon. Got back at 3.30 p.m. About 4.15 we got mixed up into rather a neat little scrap. Went on a visit to nest at night. Quiet night.

*12th June 1916*

Raining old boots. Four of ours reported here last night. Put them in the pits this morning. This afternoon went for a gallop into Estaires. Got lost for a while. Had a lovely little "hate" later on this morning. Dry heavy firing towards Armentieres. The good old 6th are out on a raid tonight. Expect something doing about 1 a.m.

*13th June 1916*

Something happened last night or this morning rather. Things rather busy down Fluerbaix way, but although we expected something up this way it didn't come off. Rotten luck because we stood to from 12.30 p.m. Report from Army corps to hand. Congratulations on the success of the raid also for the co-operation of artillery fire. This morning went up to OP. Came down to the Bty again and carried on as battery fire control officer. This afternoon the programme, by laying and firing 5 rounds. Am taking the case of one of them to England. Major came up tonight but returned to waggon line later.

*14th June 1916*

Had a bit of variety today. Shot the old 2nd on my own. The climax of a being a gunner from Cpl Sgt of 2nd Bty. Major came up and he took over at 3.30 p.m.

*15th June 1916*

Had a lovely little 'hate' at 2.30 a.m. Got a "wire" from the 10th Batt and strafed heavily all and sundry in trenches and dugs on my sector. CGP (Charles George PEARCE) (Chas) arrived back from England today. Just getting out of bunk when he blew in. All this day he has been yarning over his trip and is everlasting by quoting leaders and its people. We yarned up till 12.15 a.m. (after a phonograph evening). Major's stiff again. Got his leave stopped to for the second time. Don't know when I'll ever get mine. Heaven help some of the Bosches if they open tomorrow.

*16th June 1916*

W.L. B70 I don't know if Heaven did help the Bosches today. I hope not, but they "opened" and our shells left this end all night. Chas came up today. Eccles, Eccles, Eccles. Nothing more. Got things ship-shape today. Hate this afternoon the Major got a message saying he could go on leave tonight so that's why I am down here at the W.L. Richardson being the senior is O.C. Bty while I at present am Acting Captain and its no good to me. Not much of a joke being strafe and not being able to retaliate. Our friends opened on us tonight, but they got slightly mixed. The 101st opened the same time as we did and they fill in for the strafing. Jove these Huns do get annoyed when they start. Threw 77 mms and 5.95 over until they got too tired. Don't know how the 101st got on but think they've had a bad time. Wrote Nellie.

*17th June 1916*

Very first real gas attack and it was a beauty. Had just gone to bed and fell asleep when the sentry on guard woke me up and gave me the message. Didn't need any messages the smell was quite enough. Roused everybody up and managed to get 3 glorious whiffs of the blankey stuff. Coughed and spluttered a bit but got my helmet on before it done me any harm. Several of our chaps got slightly gassed, but nothing serious. The gas was quite visible just like a thick morning mist and white in colour. Passed off after about an hour. Gave them as good as they gave us. For every cubic foot of gas they sent over we gave them 1 H.E. so I think someone would be sorry. Our QMS hit today. Stopped a shrapnel bullet in the head from an anti-aircraft gun. Nothing serious. Busy straightening the W.L. all day. Chas came down to dinner tonight. I've got a lovely billet here. Almost resembles the old flat at Lunit Bay. Wrote Annie.

*18th June 1916*

Sunday again. All the morning. Jove there's some toll to be done to. This Flanders mud is about the most loveable stuff I've yet struck. Sundry artillery duels the order of the day and aircraft fairly busy. Gave the boys and all a days spell they don't half warrant it either.

*19th June 1916*

Damn all Huns. Don't mind them bombarding of a night because all the noise they kick up never affects the rest of this child, but with gas its different. Got roused out of bed at something past 12.30 this morning by a gas alarm. Had to stay up until 7 a.m. until everything was normal again. Fortunately for us the wind changed  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an hour after they liberated the poison cloud. In fact it blew right back over their lines. I don't wish them much harm, but I hope some of them have a throat and chest similar to mine at present. The last attack has left me with a beautiful cough and sore throat. Been swinging a pick and a shovel the majority of the day to try and get the full use of my lungs again. Had a visit from Randall this afternoon.

*20th June 1916*

Still another call last night. Some silly blighter at Z8 made himself believe that he could smell gas so the call went all through the line and I had to crawl out at 12.10 till 1.30. Found out that it was a false alarm. Still toiling. Horses and mud are parting company rather well. Rec a letter cousin A. Wrote one in return. Had a visit from Chas Randall and McIndoe today. Our Bty got into a hate today. So much so that two guns are not of much further use for firing out of. Had to send a team to the 2nd Bty at Doullens to get another gun. No 4 arrived at 2 W.L. late last night.

*21st June 1916*

In stables all morning. Got leave and went into Estaires in the afternoon. Saw McKeown and spent the majority of the afternoon with him. Managed to procure a pair of boots and sundries. Got home about 9.30. Pretty heavy strafing tonight. Saw 6 planes come back from a raid. Must have been 1000 shells tossed at them.

*22nd June 1916*

Visited the Bty this morning. Got back at 11.15 a.m. Glorious summers day today. Glorious scrap about 5 tonight. Things were warm. Another gas attack from D3 at 11.40 p.m. but it didn't reach this far.

*23rd June 1916*

If everything had been in order should have been well on my way to Manchester by now. The glorious uncertainties of war personified. The Lord only knows when I'll get leave. At the present rate of going, not for another month or so unless something unforeseen happens. This afternoon it rained like old boots. Chas came down after dinner.

*24th June 1916*

Still raining. Had to shift our horse lines again. Mud up to your knees. Glorious country this. Either get eaten up by "skeetos" or suffocated in mud and slush. Visited by Hogan, Chas and McIndoe. Artillery duels the order of the day. Major still absent. Believe he is held up at Boulounge.

*27th June 1916*

Got orders to go up to the Bty at 12 p.m. Reported here in time for a lovely little hate. Major and I went up to OP. and strafed for about 2 hours. Fired about 220 rounds. Set a fire going in Fritz's trench. Still going strong at 8 p.m. tonight.

*28th June 1916*

Raining like mad. Supposed visit from Gen. Hobbs today which didn't come off. Glorious hate this afternoon in conjunction with trench moves. Up at Battalion H.Q. (51 Inf Bat) tonight. About 11.30 had a devil of a row. A raiding party from the English line out. Shelled consistently for 3 ½ hours. No sleep of course. Just like a fireworks display in Luna Park.

*LEAVE STOPPED DAMN*

*1st July 1916*

Glorious day today. Quiet morning but had scheme 8 this afternoon with the assistance of T.M. An aeroplane raiding party went over "their" lines tonight and dropped bombs on their stationary balloons. Got 3. The Huns fired hundreds of shells at the planes but they all returned safely to the aerodrome. 10.30 p.m. Awaiting the time for our big coup. Our Bty is the centre Battery of a pretty big stunt tonight. The 9th Batt are raiding their first line about 12 p.m. and where're supporting them. On our immediate right the Huns have opened. Been going for quite an hour and a half.

*2nd July 1916 (at OP.)*

Lord what a time we had. The fun didn't commence until 2.30 but it was worth waiting for. Our friends were extra nervous. Must have had an idea we were going to "hate". They had 2 enormous search lights playing all over our lines and sent up dozens of lights every minute. No 2 got a jammed breech after firing about 50 rounds. Went and got her into action again. When we had finished all the guns were just about red hot, just like they used to be at Helles. The scrap only lasted about 28 minutes, but the guns were going like mad all that time. Our friends sent over a few 5.90 at us but they all landed a bit short. Details of raid to hand. Congratulations by CO 6th Batt on splendid barrage. Prisoners taken 20 R and F, 1 Officer, also 2 machine guns. Number of kills. With regret have to report the death of Chas's cousin who was the officer that led the raid. Up at OP. all day. Nothing much doing. Major Rogers (8th) and I had a hate on our own about 9 p.m. Big hate coming off tonight.

*3rd July 1916*

Another glorious evening. We started the ball rolling at 12.30 p.m. to the second. Jove it was some show. Our left section was attached to the 7th for the night so I had to do 4 gun battery's work with my two guns. And they didn't fail me. Had complete control and believe me we did strafe. Swept 1 and searched 300 with T.S. Our first barrage about 160 rds of H.E. breached their firing line along a front of 300 yds. You could almost have boiled a "billy" on the muzzle of either gun after we had finished firing. They were scorching hot. The paint blistered and burnt, but gee it was great. No 1 jammed only once but the delay was only for 15 sec's. Our "friends" annoyed us with shrapnel and H.E. but didn't get any of our boys. Got to bunk at 3 a.m. Woke up at 9 by a salvo of 5.9 tearing things about just down the road. Sent over about 50 but only got one hit on one of the 22nd Batty pits. Not much damage done.

*4th July 1916*

Orders out that we leave this position early Wednesday morning. Being relieved by the 37 Bty. Busy getting stores etc. ready to hand over. Brigade orders say that we are chosen for rather a neat little stunt. The 61st English Div are making two big raids tonight and we are causing a diversion and blowing down 20 of their first line parapet. Ranged on to it tonight and were all ready. Oh! Delphine. Gee but I am tired as the deuce. We got into action at 11 p.m. and for 20 minutes kept up a steady stream of shells at the salient RYF 6 secs. Then they ranged on us and gave us a fireworks display. No casualties but were awfully luckily. At 1 am I had the extreme pleasure of taking part in one of the most glorious "rough ups" that ever was. We started off with 2 rds BYF 5 sec and then for 35 solid minutes kept at gun fire. Talk about an inferno. All 4 pits were full of empty cases 2 jammed after quarter of an hour's intense firing. One stuck it out rather well, although the spring went. About 5 minutes to cease firing. We put through 992 rounds. Five of the boys in a pit were overcome with the fumes and had to be pushed out in the open air, so was in my glory for a time loading. Jove it was fine. They rained shells back at us 77 mm and 4.2. Got a direct hit on No 4 pit and punctured the landscape rather well. They were only about 20 yds out of range, but their shrapnel splattered all the pits. Left Bty position at 3 a.m. Walked to Waggon line, got our horse and came on here (Doullens) where we are massing preparatory to making a move north. Have just awake after 6 hours sleep (2 p.m.) Busy bathing, sleeping and packing kit during the afternoon. Chas came up and fed with us. Bunk at 8.30 p.m. A German prisoner who was captured by the 9th Batt in their raid, on being questioned by Provost Marshall said that if the German Infantry in this part of the one caught a 1st Divisional Artillery man they would crucify him (how nice).

*6th July 1916*

OO today. Busy getting things ship shape again. Every time we move it seems to rain like the mischief. Our horses and waggons are covered in mud, but managed to get them rather presentable by night. Went into Estaires at 6 p.m. and came out again at 9.30. Saw McKeon. No orders to shift yet.

*7th July 1916*

Major left early this morning with the Colonel to pick our new position. In last night's orders it mentions that my good comrade Lt. Rogers 6th Batt has won the M. Cross. Went into Estaires again this day. Went and said goodbye to Ronduel who I met through McKeon. They have a beautiful home in the heart of Estaires. Had a famous time. Major returned tonight. Have to be in readiness to move at a minutes notice.

*8th July 1916*

Busy getting things ready for a move. Contrary to expectations we go south. Had a bit of revolver practise at night. Chas and I went into Doullens at night for an hour.

*9th July 1916*

R.O.O today. Went out exercising horses this morning. Afterwards jumped some of the horses. Several visits from Taubes today. The Colonel paid us a visit today and brought with him the news that my 2nd star has been confirmed. So from now on I hold the rank of a First Lieutenant. What a Dorg.

*10th July 1916*

Went into Beauval for a ride today with Chas and Morris. Had a great blow round. Managed to buy several things including a rain coat and 2 rather decent hand-worked hats which I sent to 48 MR. Arrived home at 11 p.m.

*11th July 1916*

Marching orders to hand. Don't know where we're off to but its south (some way) somewhere. Left Waggon Line at 8 p.m. and entrained at Beauval West at 10.45. Left the station at 1.24 a.m. and arrived at our railway destination (Doullens) at 6.15 am. Had a decent compartment all the way shared same with the Major and Richardson.

*12th July 1916*

Left station at 8 a.m. and set out for a 16 mile ride to our billets. Glorious country here, and beautiful old houses everywhere. At present we're in rotten billets. Had hard luck in not being quartered in a lovely chateau overnight by a Countess (French). At present is D.A. H.Q. It's a lovely home. Don't know how long we're here for, but I'll be very thankful when they push us up a bit further. "Bathed"

*13th July 1915*

Slept like a log all night. Up with the larks this morning feeling awfully fit and well. Great climate here. Down in stables all the morning. Horses stood the journey rather well. Out for a 10 mile route march this afternoon. Went through several villages among which was Flesselles. Every little village, no matter how small can boast of a church. In the evening Chas and I visited the chateaux and had a saunter through the House Park. Gee it's a paradise. There's one long drive through one portion of the Park which is the most magnificent I've yet seen and I spent 8 days in Marseilles. Mail arrived tonight. Managed to catch one from H.R. "Hossie" and "Bream". Awaiting orders to move up to the line. Wish they would hurry up and come to hand. Can't settle down to a quiet existence. Utterly impossible.

*14th July 1916*

Orderly "dorg" today. The Battery out for a route march this afternoon, but did not accompany them. Sent No 1 and No 3 to workshops today. Had another stroll through the chateaux grounds.

*15th July 1916*

Out for another route march today. Mail arrived this evening. Caught a few. Chas came down to tea. Afterwards repeated last nights programme and visited the Chateaux. Saw the countess's two daughters and spoke to them. Struck Major Riggall and passes the evening with him. Still awaiting orders to shift.



*Château de Flesselles*

*16th July 1916*

Orders to Imski to hand at 4 am. Packed up and left billets at 9.30. Our column was 6 ¼ miles long. Arrived to get in on all the other crowd for a decent waggon line. Bivouacked for the night. Raining. Major, Richardson, Faulkner, Robertson and Sele in a hay-loft feet deep in straw. Pinched a couple of ducks.

*17th July 1916*

Awakened several times in the night by the sound of heavy firing. All night long our heavies were going. Still raining. Mud everywhere. Still awaiting orders to Imski.

*18th July 1916*

Orders to hand at 11 a.m. to "get". "Got" at 2 p.m. Trekked along a road up to the horses knees in slush. Got to this village Harponville about 6 p.m. Devil of a noise here. Bombardment day and night. Awaiting orders to go into position. Chas camping with us.

*19th July 1916*

Quiet day. Kicked about stables nearly all the time. Orders to go into position to hand at 6 p.m. Left at 6.30 trekked along road to Albert. Arrived at temporary W.L. at 11.30. Got out to Bty POD with CTA at 2.30. Slept in German 3 line trench (what was) among bombs to.

*20th July 1916*

(Becourt) Playing at war again. Gee, don't they strafe down this way. All night and all day without ceasing. All kinds and conditions of shells. From 9 pounds to 19 inch hows. Things are in a mess here. The dead are thick and equipment and gear almost as bad. At present I'm in a German officer's dug-out about 30 feet underground. Their beds are still intact so hope to get at least 2 decent hours rest tonight. We're even cooking with their stores and using their phone wires for our phones. The trenches are just a mass of cracks and blown about earth. One dug-out is full of dead Germans. Fixed up one trench of five for my guns and opened at 3.30 pm. Saw two good sights today. The Germans stopped one of our planes and tonight one of our planes got a Taube. Saw Chas today. In fact, strolled along for a break.

*21st July 1916*

In action all night. Absolutely no rest here. At it all day as well. Gee, if they bring many more batteries up here the shells will jam in the air. Our friends got one hit today. Got a hit on a pit just in front of us and blew out a few. Been firing all day.

*22nd July 1916*

Just got to bunk at 10.30 when I had to bet out and strafe. Made things merry until 1 am. Stood to until 2 am and them managed to get about 2 hours sleep. Went up to OP after break and had the extreme pleasure of knowing that the whole blinking German artillery were bent on one stunt only that was blowing the OP and the trench to blazes at once. One big coal box firing HE with sulphur fumes, kept landing at precisely every 2 minutes from 1 pm 'til 7 pm. Gee things were in a mess. Had a decent days shooting however. Got down to Bty at 8.30.

*23rd July 1916*

Oh! Oh! Delphine. What a night. About 9 pm last night we got the order for the attack and at precisely 28 minutes past 12 the circus started and I think I can safely say that last night I saw the biggest fireworks display I've ever seen. Gee, it was hot. Had the extreme pleasure of being slightly 'gassed' again. Those confounded beggars on the ridge shot over gas shells and made things rather interesting. Our own cordite fumes were such that you could cut them with a knife because the wind happened to misbehave itself and blow back on me. It's now 3.45 pm and we're still in action firing slowly (about one round every 2 minutes). Had to go up to the OP just after daybreak to strafe owing to a wire coming through to the effect that the Huns were massing for a counter-attack in rear of Pozieres. So hated, rather considerably. Managed to get my clothes off for a couple of hours but willingly exchange my lungs, throat, ears and eyes for those of any cow or horse ever turned out to graze. Can hardly see out of my eyes and am as deaf as a post. Details of the advance not to hand as yet, but our chaps (1st Australian Division) seem very successful. They have captured all the trenches they set out to take and ¾ of Pozieres itself. At present the Huns are reinforced with infantry and artillery and are creating merry Hell but I don't fancy they'll play any funny business until tonight. Then I daresay we'll have another 'box on' in repelling them. The English troops who last night

charged on our right have had to come back, impossible to hold on, but our chaps are hanging on like the proverbial bulldog. Mail arrived tonight. Caught quite a few letters also a box of 'Chairman' cigarettes.

*24th July 1916*

Stood to all night expecting trouble. The beggars up ahead (over the ridge) playfully sent over some more gas shells to annoy us. Down at the Bty all day. Managed to get to sleep at 3.30 pm but at 5 the major woke me to and go up and register barrage lines for some stunt or other. Went up to OP and registered. Got down to Battery again and had just finished the first course of a rather appetite satisfying dinner when Fritz started an attack so rushed up to OP again and strafed him somewhat. His attack failed miserably and he got a beautiful hiding. Later. Orders out at 11 pm tonight for a further advance. Have just finished measuring out my guns' angles and ranges and waiting for the time 1.58 am to come. The attack is going to be something big. The objective being to capture the town of Pozieres and the 3rd lines of German defences beyond it. The English troops tried three times to take it but failed. Tonight will be a real test of the 1st Australian Division against the best German regiments on this front.

*25th July 1916*

We win, but at a pretty rotten cost. All night long (24th) we stood to waiting for the assault. It came at 1.58 am. This is the biggest inferno I've been in yet. The bombardment was terrific. At 3.30 it reached the climax and our infantry charged. At present we hold the town and the trenches to the right and behind it. This afternoon the enemy increased his bombardment at a terrific pace and blew our trenches to nothing. In some places there are no trenches at all and the infantry are in shell craters but sticking it out. Immediately on our troops occupying Pozieres 'their' artillery bombarded it with heavy stuff, and for 4 hours the town was invisible. Had to send No 2 away this afternoon. Only have one gun that we can fire with safety. The rotten part of the whole thing is that we can't get ammunition. The English system again. It's always the same. People at home do nothing else but talk. As yet they don't seem to realise what ammunition means.

*26th July 1916*

In action all night, Managed to get a paltry 400 rounds up to the Bty. If the Huns only knew they could waltz through and take the Pozieres without much trouble, and then this place would be like a butchers shop. They're bombarding like mad and we're not firing a round. Neither are any of the batteries around us and the infantry have been sending down SOS for support which we can't give them. Only wish that we were permitted to get rifles and go up to reinforce them. Took advantage of our rotten system and slept for a few hours. Have had 6 hours sleep in the last 96. Later. Hur-bloomin'-ray. Ammunition arrived in any quantity so celebrated the occasion by strafing heavily. A very complimentary circular to hand from General Walker, warmly praising the 1st Australian Division on their splendid achievement. Also one from the GRA commenting on the splendid work done by our batteries. Feel 100% happier than I did an hour ago. Even went out of my way and had a bath. Was about half way through with that pleasant operation when Chas came along and was calmly yarning away when a shell burst right over us (a 4.5 how) and we both found ourselves on the ground but unhurt. The Hun found our Battery today and strafed us with 4.2. Didn't get the gun though. Sent quite a lot of GSP cards away today. Feeling awfully fit and well and ready for another 36 hours scrap. Got an estimate of the number of rounds we've fired since we came into the line in France. Out of four guns we have fired about 12000 rounds all together to date.

*27th July 1916*

In action all night but as ammunition is plentiful for once strafed right royally. Up at OP at 6 am. Got there and coughed for about 2 hours afterward. The Huns were sending over dozens of gas shells and poor old OP got the benefit of them. Things fairly rowdy during the morning but at 3 pm 'til 5.20 pm things reached a climax. 'They' shelled Pozieres and Contalmaison to blazes with 5.9 and 9.2 HE. Couldn't see Pozieres for over an hour for smoke and spume while in Contalmaison they obscured it with gas from the shells. On our right a devil of a bombardment has been going on all day. Hope it's a prelude to an attack by the English and French troops. As soon as they advance further we will be able to go ahead again without fear of being cut off. Got hold of a Parisian paper today. They're just about going mad with delight over our taking and holding Pozieres.

*28th July 1916*

'Strafing' as per usual. Glorious day. Down at the Battery. Tried to get a little sleep this morning (after being up all night again) but the Hun didn't want me to have any spell evidently so I missed. Artillery duels all day. At 4 pm our

esteemed friends liberated two gas clouds, but owing to the high wind blowing at the time didn't do us any harm here. Wrote McKeon.

*29th July 1916*

Got the order for a further attack at 12.15 am. Opened up and supported the 2nd Division in their attack on the German positions north east of Pozieres. Our friends found our Battery and strafed it rather well but missed getting the guns. Our chaps had to abandon the attack owing to the wire being too thick in front of Fritz's trenches. Up at OP all day. Pozieres and Contalmaison getting their full share of shells. Artillery hates all day.



*Reserve line at Pozieres*

*30th July 1916*

Very hot day today both as regards to heat and getting strafed. Nothing much doing. In action up 'til 5 am this morning. Down at Battery all day. Had 3 hours sleep this afternoon. At 6.10 pm the English troops out in Marez Woods way attacked. Don't know how they got on. Paid Randall a visit this evening.

*31st July 1916*

In action all night and half the morning. Our friends sent over quite a number of gas shells, some of them Lachrymatory which make your eyes and nostrils smart like blazes. Had to get into helmets again which is a rotten performance all together. Ordered to report to 19th Batt. HQ near Pozieres this afternoon. Got there at 5 pm. Just in front of BHQ there's a team of German horses hitched to an ammunition waggon which one of our shells found out. Sat up half the night and yarned to the OC and his commanders. They are all Sydney chaps so passed quite a merry night during which Fritz was quite annoying with his barrages.

*1st August 1916*

Ordered to report to Bty today. Got down here at 12.30. Had a 'strafe' this afternoon, also a bath. Don't half need it after kicking around the trenches. 1st and 2nd Brigades are relieved today. As a matter of fact our Brigade is the only 1st Division unit not yet retired. That's what comes of being a 'pet' Brigade. We're to stay here until another big push takes place and if successful we go out immediately afterwards. At least what's left of us. Fritz done an awfully silly thing this evening. Attacked in mass and we got him just as he left his trenches. Never got within bombarding range of our lines.

*2nd August 1916*

In action all night. Got 'strafed' again. Went up to OP at 6.30. Nothing much doing only 10 minute hates until this afternoon when we started a devil of a strafe. Opened up with pretty nearly every available gun along our 3 ½ mile front and blew Fritz's trenches to blazes. Several good aeroplane duels today. Got an SOS from the front line at 9 pm and created merry H. Complimentary orders out tonight. Reproduced at end of 'Diary'.

*3rd August 1916*

Down at Bty all day. Usual night stunt last night. Got 'strafed' three times again today. Artillery duels most of the day. Expecting trouble within the next 36 hours.

#### *4th August 1916*

In action all night, managed to get to bunk at 4 am. Had a fairly quiet day today. Orders out this afternoon to the effect that we are to advance again. Hoo-bloomin'ray.

#### *5th August 1916*

(At least I am able to get into the old dug-out and write up this in my diary.) Well, we score another big win. OG1 and OG2 are both captured by us and now the way for another 10 miles towards Hun territory will be comparatively easy. At present we occupy the biggest ridge around this part of the country so can observe their every movement. The scrap lasted about 4 ½ hours and was intense in the extreme. At 2 am I received orders from HQ to go up to the front line to map out our gains and try and get communication through to Brigade. Got stopped by their barrage before reaching Copse Av but managed to get to Advanced Batt. HQ a little later and from there went into the firing line. The Huns suffered enormous losses. Their dead are thick between and in the captured trenches. We took hundreds of prisoners. At 4.30 they counter-attacked in masses but our maxims and Lewis guns just mowed them down as they advanced. They only reached our trench in one place where our chaps awaited them with the bayonet. Their supports couldn't face it so returned and came under our artillery barrage and were mown down in scores. Some of the prisoners who came in later were just about mad. One party in particular about 60 strong walked in with their hands up. When the German artillery opened on them and got the lot. All day long their artillery have been raining shells from 7.7 to 9.2 on our new position and at 3 pm we had to come out of OG2 and back into OG1. The majority of our casualties occurred while hanging on. Couldn't touch our wounded at all because the barrage put up between the trenches was too thick. The fire died down about 5 pm when our chaps went back into OG2. The 4th Division (Australian) took over from the infantry at night. Expecting word for our own shift. Got down and reported to Brigade HQ tonight. Had the unique experience of being buried today.

#### *6th August 1916*

No rest for the wicked. Gee how bad we must be. Last night (and this morning) from 11 pm 'til 4 am we have been paid particular attention to from a 77 Bty two 4.2 guns and two 9.2s. Our Battery position is just a shambles. Three of our pits are just about level with the ground and the whole place is one mass of craters. Several of our boys got buried but managed to get them out all right. Orders out this afternoon to advance another 1500 yds and dig fresh position. The major and Faulkner have gone up with support guns. At present I am OC Battery here. Have my two guns in action and am thoroughly enjoying myself. Believe we are to be relieved during the next 3 or 4 days. We've had the position of honour during all the scrapping of been in action since the stunt commenced, and well up in advance of the other batteries.

#### *7th August 1916*

In action all night and got heavily shelled by 5.9, 9.2, and 11 inch guns. They came over every 4 minutes so between times we used to get off a few rounds gun fire and then 'streak' for cover usually in one of the craters because our pits were blown away. Huns attacked in mass at 5 am and succeeded in getting into and holding OG2 until we dropped onto that and blew them about. Then the infantry charged and advanced another 150 yds over OG2. Our position is in an awful mess. There's one crater here made by an 11 inch shell that would accommodate a railway engine. Orders to hand at 2.30 that we are to be relieved. The Lahore (Indian) Division are taking over from us. Left the position at 5.30. Got on to the road and got shelled to blazes. Got to waggon line and came to Albert via Marez Wood. Camped in a tent at night. First decent night's sleep I've had for ages.

#### *8th August 1916*

Up with the larks this morning. Made an awful mistake last night by thinking I would have a night's rest. Got pulled out of bed at 12.30 to attend to Bde orders and also out at 5.30 to prepare for another hate. Left Albert at 9 am and arrived at Le Val de Maison in the evening. Roads coated with 6 inches of dust which all but chokes you but it's much better than gas.

#### *9th August 1916*

Left bivouac at 9.30 and trekked to our new posy, St Legerles Domant. Great joy. Met most of the old boys of the 1st Brigade. Gee, but we've lost some good men during this last scrap and the taking of Pozieres. Great quakes here. Slept out under the stars at night but hope to get billets now as the 1st and 2nd Brigades are moving out.

*Extract from Brigade Order issued on the night of the 9th August 1916.*

*1st Australian Division*

*3rd Field Artillery Brigade*

*HQ*

*St Seger*

*9/8/1916*

*To BCs*

*Officers*

*and all other Ranks*

*Simply expressing, most sincerely, to every one of you my grateful appreciation of your work during the last twenty days.*

*(signed) W.L.H Bung . . Leuit. Colonel Commanding 3rd FA Bde*

*10th August 1916*

*Raining. Inspected by General Walker and Hobbs this morning. Got warmly congratulated on our work which makes up for a deuce of a lot of hardships.*

*Saw Chas at night.*

*11th August 1916*

*Getting straight most of the day. Enjoying this spell immensely. Chas, Richardson and myself went for a glorious ride this evening. Great to be able to cruise around the country without having to dodge shells and craters.*

*Thanking the Artillery who made the taking and holding of Pozieres possible.*

*H. B. Walker (General)*

