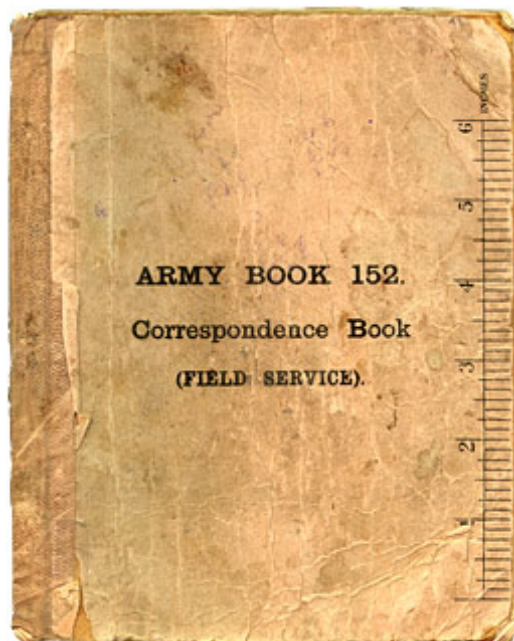


Diary Five
Dated from the
12th August 1916 - 16th March 1917



Ralphs fifth and last Army Book 152 Correspondence diary
With entries from the Western Front and Passchendaele
Diary size: (Soft covered) 16 x 20 cm.

12th August 1916

Still spelling. Everything as it should be even the weather is behaving itself.

13th August 1916

Sunday again. Still spelling. Beginning to get fit again.

14th August 1916

Out for exercise most of the day. Rumours afloat that we return to the Firing Line tomorrow. Hope so. Too quiet out here. Have got so used to the noise by now that whenever we get to a quiet spot you've got an idea that the earth is ceasing to revolve, and the sun's going out.

15th August 1916

Marching orders to hand. Left St Seger at 10 am this morning. Arrived at Val de Maison at 2.20. 'Fed' in the rain. On the move again at 5, arrived here Vadencourt Wood at 7.30. Raining like old Nick.

16th August 1916

Orders to go into the Firing Line. Left Vadencourt Wood at 8am and accompanied the major to our position. Took over the guns and position of the 12th Bty at 1 pm. Received by the Huns with great gusto. Sent over several salvos of 4 H.I to herald our arrival. Annoyed by 77s all night.

17th August 1916

Things pretty damp this morning. At barrage work all night. This morning happened to see one of the finest sights I've yet seen since we started playing war. An anti-aircraft gun brought down a Taube from a great height. Saw the whole show through the glasses. The shell exploded right under the tail, and set the body on fire and he came down beautifully on his planes alone until within 1000 feet of the ground when he turned a "sevenser" and landed in our lines, adjacent to the Bty.

28th August 1916

Gee wizz, in clover again. Hope D.A. will forget all about us for a few days. Got a beautiful billet. The ladies of the house can't do enough for me although they start trying at 6.30 am and finish at 9.30 pm. Got a double bed and a bonny room, and living like a king generally. Went for a ride tonight. Am getting my hearing back gradually.

29th August 1916

Raining like blazes Major Faulkner left to review our next "posy". My luck was in for once the Major thinking that I needed a spell so took him up on it. Glorious billet. Here they do look after me. Went out to see Goldfinch tonight. Got soaked through coming home. Mail arrived. Caught a few. Morris came round this morning and shafted the plan.

30th August 1916

Still raining and mud up to your knees. Have been wet through 3 times today, and the ladies of the house are trying all they know how to spoil me and keep me in dry clothes. (If they leave me here for a week I will gladly go through another 20 days at Pozieres.

31st August 1916

Rode into Armentieres (Ypres way) for Pay. Great ride. This afternoon rode into Bailleul. Had dinner there.

1st September 1916

Marching orders to hand. Left Godewaersvelde at 1 pm and arrived at Reninghelst at 4. Awfully sorry to leave the billet back at Godewaersvelde. The people were really great. This place is like the proverbial pig sty, mud and slush everywhere. And not a billet, what's more it's raining like blazes. Expected to go up to the Bty tonight, but orders came round 10 minutes before we were timed to leave to cancel our going. Expect to get up tomorrow night.

2nd September 1916

Decent day today. Went to 27th Bty A W.L. and handed over 4 guns. Rode into Poperinge later on. Got back to W.L. at 6 pm. Orders to hand to take my section into action tonight. Rode up to rendezvous and "embarked" on a G.S Waggon and was driven up to the Position. On the way we came through

Ypres. Saw what's left of the Cloth Hall and Cathedral. Both looking very pretty after their sundry bombardments. Ypres is blown to blazes generally. Must have been quite a decent city once upon a time. Our guide lost himself completely so had to engineer my way out by map. Got within half a mile of the Battery when we got a gas alarm signalled, but it missed us. Damn these Stun machine guns.



The town of Godewaersvelde

3rd September 1916

3 Gas clouds last night but just missed us. Could see them quite plainly. Busy getting the hang of things today. Find that we are in the Ypres Salient (noted for gas, 15 inch Hows, and machine guns). Just about 1600 yds from our friends. Nothing much doing at present. Got a bonny dug-out all to myself.

4th September 1916

Getting maps to fix up today. Visited Batt 2 this morning with the Major. Believe we have to teach the Huns up this way that they're not dorgs and that their not the only people around Belgium. Reported for duty (Liaison) to 3rd Batt at night.

5th September 1916

Nothing much doing up here baring a few shells floating about. Also a machine gun or six, and a few snipers. Camped in the RSM's dug-out. Mine got blown in with a "minnie". Raining like blazes. Trenches up to your knees in mud and water. Glorious stunt plodding through it. Never got relieved until 8.30 pm so had a beautiful walk down in pouring rain. Spent a pleasant time falling into craters and treading on rats while a Stun machine gun played all over the track.

6th September 1916

Decent sort of a day again. Several aeroplane stunts and an occasional artillery duel. Down at the Bty all day. Reported to O.P. tonight.

7th September 1916

This place beats cock fighting. It's right in no man's land between ours and the Huns first lines, and infested with rats. Last night one of our patrols called in on us, and the night previous a patrol of Huns (8 all told) were taken prisoners about 100 yds from here. Strafed a bit. Came down to Bty at night.

8th September 1916

Glorious day. Mail arrived. Caught quite a few. Visited by General Hobbs and Colonel Anderson. "Strafed" Aeroplane hates all day interspersed with artillery hates. Gas attack on the left.

9th September 1916

Had a little hate today. Strafed Fritz rather badly. Nothing much doing. Went up to O.P. at night.

10th September 1916

Had a war on my own today. Located a wall of sandbags which happened to obstruct my view of a road used rather consistently by Fritz so got No 1 on to it and blew it about. Got a hit with HE the 3rd round. A deuce of a lot of sniping up here with machine guns spraying every yard of no mans land. Got down to the Bty tonight.

11th September 1916

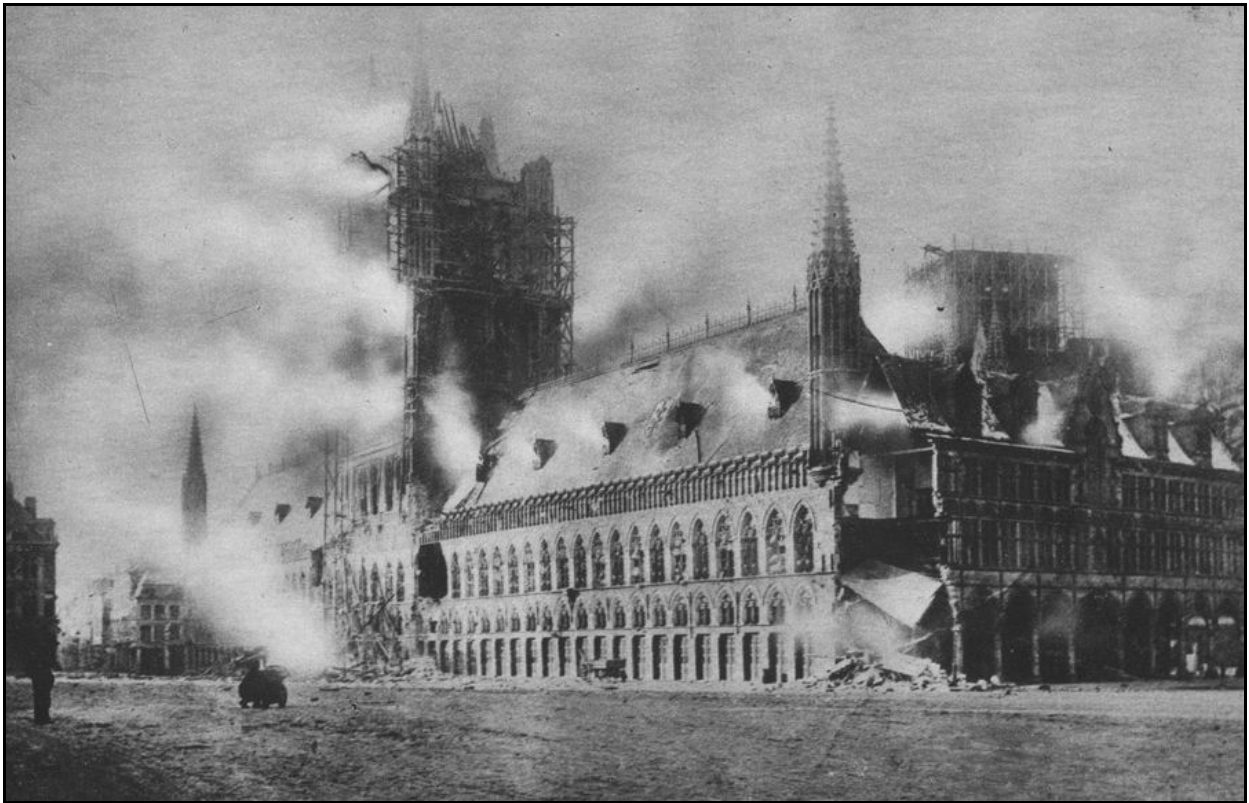
Down at Bty all day. Visited the Detached Section this morning also saw Delaney of the old 2nd. Visited by General Johnstone today. Came and had afternoon tea in the mess. Went up to OP at night.

12th September 1916

Machine guns still busy up here. Riddle this place about every ¼ of an hour, but the rats are the worst. Tried all I knew to get to sleep but the rats say "no" so that settles it. Wrote Don, and worked out range tables all night. Started a war at 12 o'clock which lasted all day. Blew a considerable portion of "Bty" trench away and strafed a working party rather prettily. Got the OP strafed in return but they can't make it look any worse than what it is. The only rotten part about it is they cut our wires to blazes. Came down to Bty at night.

13th September 1916

Orders to hand to get out. Handing position over to 12 Bty. Visited an old 2nd Bty comrade, Harry Gund, OC 38 Bty. Had a glorious dust up this afternoon. Quite a merry night with OC 12th and Rees and Packman.



The destruction of Cloth Hall, Ypres, Belgium

14th September 1916

Busy handing over all day. Left Gun Position at 5.30 and walked down to Waggon Line 8. Lovely in the pouring rain. Passed through Ypres by route. Saw what remains of the Cathedral and also the Cloth Hall. Both must have been beautiful structures before "strafe" was started. Got wet through before we got to Bty also covered in mud. Area as charts.

15th September 1916

The sun came out and reported itself today. Visited by the Colonel this morning. Believe CGP is still away at a signalling stunt. Don't know where we're off to this hop, but we're on our way.

16th September 1916

Richardson and self floated into Poperinge this afternoon and had dinner there. Saw Morris today. Believe I go on furlough on the 24th of this month. Hu-bloomin-ray.

17th September 1916

BOO [Battery Orderly Officer] today. Still awaiting orders concerning our future movements. General Hobbs abroad today and Faulkner.

18th September 1916

Raining like blazes all day. At night accepted an invitation for the Bty to attend an evening given by some English Regiment who think the living world of our chaps. Went down to the YMCA at Reninghelst and spent an enjoyable evening. This English Regiment can boast of quite a few "artists" of no mean order. Had a visit from Teddy Randall. Believe my leave is OK.

19th September 1916

BOO today. Sun out once again. Tonight we have a Bty dinner at an establishment along the road.

20th September 1916

Gorgeous night last night. Got rather lurid towards 12 pm. Guests Major Richardson, Faulkner, Rolston McMullen 4th, McIndoe and self. Raining like old nick all day. Visited Poperinge this afternoon. Nothing much doing.

21st September 1916

BOO today. Still sunning. Faulkner and myself rode in to Poperinge this afternoon. Got back for dinner.

22nd September 1916

Aeroplane raids this morning. Visited Poperinge with the Major and Richardson. Had dinner in there and visited 2 Picture shows. Great war this.

23rd September 1916

BOO today. Getting ready for LEAVE. Teddy Randall came along and brought my pass this afternoon. Hoo-bloomin-ray.

24th September 1916

(Written after returning from leave) Left Poperinge at 6.15AM. Met Major James 1st Pioneers and Capt Parkinson 12th FA. Arrived at Hazebrouck at 8.15. Had a break at some hotel or other. Left Hazebrouck at 10.15. Saw Chas. who was returning from St Omer. Arrived in Boulognestraat at 1.30. Had dinner at the officers club. Couldn't get a boat across the Channel so put up at the Folkestone Hotel with the Major and Capt. Visited the 2nd H.G.H. Had a pleasant evening eh what?

25th September 1916

Left Boulognestraat at 10.30AM. Escorted across by umpteen destroyers. Arrived at Folkestone. Self, came up through Kent and Sussex. Arrived at the village of London. Some city believe me. Doc and I put up at the Regent Palace. Major's staying at the Grand. Visited the Pay Office and strafed the withdrawal form. Went out to Fulham and sent my trunk on to 48 M.B.E. Major Doc and myself fell into the TSOC for dinner after that. To be continued in our next.

26th September 1916

Wired Auntie this morning and left London (Euston) by N.W. Express for Manchester. Arrived there at 3.57PM. Went out to MB and gee wizz what a reception I got. The girls were staying down at Blackpool. Honestly it's worth waiting 2 years for.

27th September 1916

Left this morning and came on to Cleveleys just outside Blackpool. Ran the girls to earth and since then haven't had a moments quiet. Took them all over the place and got to where they were staying about 11.30 pm then returned to the "Clifton" where I am staying. Going some.

3rd October 1916

Putting up at the Regent again. Am waiting word for when my boat goes. Hope the German High Sea Fleet comes out and blocks the channel.

4th October 1916

Visited Pay Office and struck Smith of the 8th. After that a blank please.

5th October 1916

Left London at 9.50. Arrived in Folkestone and left there at 4.20PM. Got to Boulognestraat and came right through to Poperinge. Walked 2 ½ miles on a beautifully muddy road (at about 2.30 am) but what's the odds. I've had my leave and enjoyed every moment of it.

6th October 1916

Trying to reconcile myself to things generally but its no go. Major and Faulkner left tonight for the Salient. We take over position from the 3rd Bty tomorrow night. Thank Heaven something exciting is going to happen.

7th October 1916

Had a visit from N.S.H. today. He has also just returned from leave, and like me is feeling absolutely rotten. Received orders from H.Q. to report up at the Battery this afternoon. Came up here via Ypres. Great little position. Hope they don't shift us again for a few months. We relieved the 3rd Bty this trip. Chas came over at night and - well we yarned until some unearthly hour.

8th October 1916

Getting straight at Battery all day. Awfully funny being amongst guns again and hearing noises. Chas came over for dinner.

9th October 1916

Still straightening out the Battery. Faulkner got his leave today. Robertson has been sent to attend a school so that leaves the major and myself to run the Battery. Liaison Officer at 12th Batt H.Q. tonight.

10th October 1916

Left Batt H.Q. at 9.00 this morning for O.P. Stayed up there all day. Our O.P. is in the first line trench. Plenty of "minnies" and rifle grenades floating about. Strafed this afternoon. Got back to Bty at 6.30PM. Gun Officer tonight.

11th October 1916

Gun Officer all day. Nothing much doing only trying to forget London. Tres Bon, I don't think. On duty tonight.

12th October 1916

F.O.O. today. Hated considerably. Blew their front line about and searched the country in rear rather well. They had the colossal hide to blow down a few yards of our line with minnies last night, so we equalled the score. Tonight on getting back to Bty hear that there's a raid on and got mixed up in a neat little set up at 6.30. Quiet night otherwise.

13th October 1916

Raid proved a complete success. Killed quite a few and caught one or two prisoners. Down at Bty all day. Chas came over at night, also received hurried orders to hand over to 17th Bty A.F.A. Their O.C. and one sub came along and are at present staying with us.

14th October 1916

Up straightening out lines of fire and registering barrages. Made a mess of the railway over in their lines. Returned to Battery for dinner and went up to Batt H.Q. for Liaison duty. Done a 300 yds sprint along the line because they spotted us and made things lively with wizz bangs. Very Turkey. About 7pm they bombarded very heavily with artillery and trench mortars succeeded in busting up the trenches rather well and made things dashed uncomfortable for a while. Got word through to our Batteries and had half an hours fun on my own. We won easily. Gave them particular H.

15th October 1916

Returned to Bty this morning. Have been getting ready to hand over. Handed over complete and left Bty Position at 8.30. Major and OC rode down through Ypres. Glorious moonlight ride. Arrived at W.L. later.

16th October 1916

Left W.L. as a complete Div of Artillery this morning. Trekged to within one mile of where we stayed for the night. Slept between sheets once more.

17th October 1916

On the move from 6.30 this morning. Arrived at Bonnay at 7pm. Passed through the Town of Corbie which is some place.

18th October 1916

Still at BOO today. Don't know where we're off to, but we're on our way.

19th October 1916

Raining like blazes. Mud everywhere. Sergt Bradwell and Elliot presented with their ribbons today. Enjoying things all day.

20th October 1916

B.O.O. today. Glorious and fresh after the rain. Frost this morning and some cold too. Orders to hand for our move down the Somme way. Leave on the 22nd. Wouldn't mind staying at this billet for a month. Awfully decent people.

25th October 1916

Ordered into position on the left. The most busy night I had in my life, at least one of them. Got hurried orders early this morning to take my section into position. Given a map ref of the relieved Bty W.L. and set off in pouring rain mud knee deep. Arrived at 13 Bty NZFA Waggon Line at 12.30. Met several Nelson boys I knew. No water or feed for my horses. Left again at 3pm for the Bty Position. Didn't think roads could be so bad. All along for miles they are shelled to blazes. In some places for 50 yards they are just pulverised into quagmire. Got held up by vehicles getting bogged a dozen and one times. Took us an hour and a half to go a quarter of a mile.

26th October 1916

Still having a H of a time. Mud and slush knee deep everywhere. Even our Gun Pits are half under water. Managed to get 'B' Gun up and into position this morning before daybreak. Getting 'A' Gun into a crater and at present she is about 400 yds along the road, but daylight beat us as we are in direct view of the Huns. Went up to OP and strafed during the day. Had some fun. Battery got shelled during the afternoon and we had to withdraw detachments. Faulkner got up to Bty tonight with his two guns, and as 'A' is in position too, let the war go on. Up at OP tonight. Got lost on the way up, to say nothing of getting 'bogged'.

27th October 1916

Huns got very cheeky last night and early this morning. Threw quite a number of Gas shells about so we had to teach them a lesson again. Things still resembling a Hopeless Dawn etc. Up at OP all day. Strafing a road rather well. Tonight at 4.30 the Huns gave us what oh for an hour, so we sent back quite a few stamped receipts. They got into the Bty and also the OP and blew things about a bit. Still raining and as cold as Charity. Can't walk in the trenches so have got to 'risk it' out over the parapet. Awfully exciting, believe me. Got down to Bty tonight and had a feed. The first one since early morning. Am going to live up at OP in the future I think. Too many shell craters to fall into between the Bty and OP.

28th October 1916

Up at OP all day. Fairly fine but the mud is well rotten. Strafing a bit and got shelled by 5.9 at once. Cold as Charity. Had dinner with Capt Taylor, OC 2nd Bty. Went down to Bty for tea. Sleeping at OP tonight and Gee, isn't it cold.

29th October 1916

Still residing in my Palatial Residence. PR amplified means a trench knee deep in mud, a dug out which leaks like mad, and not wide enough to turn around in. Major Rogers came up this morning, and we both vented our sentiments on Thillooy and Ligny-Thillooy. Rain and slush still going strong. Haven't even got a dry change, and have been wet through for the last 4 days. Still, they tell us we're winning, so what's the odds. Some cheerful infantry chaps, hardly recognisable through the ample coating of mud, have just passed singing like mad 'Are we downhearted, no we're not'. Dined at Bty tonight and came up here before dark.

30th October 1916

Gee, what a Devil of a night. Sat up in a dug out with water 6 inches deep. Got an awful cold. Cleared up a bit today thank Heaven but all this trench has fallen in. Quite a war on today.



Map of Ligny-Thillooy showing the trench system

1st November 1916

Fairly dry today. Devil of a strafe on all round. Mr Hun very busy with 5.9s and 8.2 all day and paid us particular attention with the former. Believe there's to be another push here shortly and we're to be in it. Hope so, because the sooner it's over the sooner we can get a 2nd decent wash and into dry clothes once more. Mud still going strong.

2nd November 1916

Still raining like H. Heavily shelled with 5.9 and 8.2 all day. Still up at OP. Recalled to Bty tonight. Believe I am advanced to OO tomorrow for a big strafe. Huh-bloomin-ray.

3rd November 1916

Rotten luck. Strafe cancelled so returned to OP this morning and have amused myself by strafing a working party and knocking a house over on their lines about. Got a hit on the wall with the first round at 4800 yds. Positions both shelled with 8.2 and 5.9 tonight. They made things very willing.

4th November 1916

A fine day at last. Have been taking advantage of the weather and building a new OP. Ross of the 8th badly wounded tonight. The usual evening strafe tonight. Orders out for the attack at 9.10 tomorrow.

5th November 1916

Gee what a night. Had just about completed the OP when it rained in torrents. Got flooded out again. Everybody wet through to the skin. Went down to the Bty at 12 pm for dry things and a sleep. Bitterly cold but still we're winning this war, so what's the odds. Returned to OP to survey the ruins this morning. Got word that our attack starts at 9.10. Later. Again we win. Although not so decisively as previous. Our left and right got hung up but the centre got there alright. Devil of a H. Got shelled to blazes tonight and suffered a few casualties. Still fine thank Heaven. Worked on OP all night.

5th November 1916

Finished OP this morning sometime. Things still normal. Had a great time strafing Huns. They got excited and came out over in the open and I done what I left Aus to do, namely killed them. Got one party on the road leading to Thilloy and played merry H. Quite a few stretchers were required. Got a few in Trap Trench also along the road behind Thilloy. OP looking awfully decent.

6th November 1916

Raining all day. Dug out standing it well. Sundry hates but nothing much. Slept the majority of the day.

7th November 1916

What about sniping? (This is in the darker script of the 8th) Gee wizz what a day. Got orders to report to Bty HQ at 6.30 this morning. Reported and was sent up to the Front line to register the 8th and 9th Btys on a ticklish bit of Hate. Gen Holmes up here and under his directions brought our fire right down to within 35 yds of our line. Gee it was some shoot. Got complimented on it too. Our trenches are in a Devil of a state. We waded through one sap up to our waists in water and slush. Got back to Bty at 6 pm; came up to OP.

8th November 1916

Decent day today. Sun conspicuous by its presence once more. Still its horribly muddy yet. Reported to the Colonel at HQ this morning and gave him all the information I had got during my trip up forward. Saw Chas. Had a screw at High wood. Knocked about slightly. Got bogged four separate times but am still alive. Decent observation for once. One house over in their lines which I used to love strafing has been turned into a Hospital so won't be able to strafe it any more. Got a ring from the major this afternoon and he passed on the following message: *From OC Basket to OC 'Blow' WB15 From General Willis. Thanking the artillery Liaison Officers for the good work done yesterday. Please convey congratulations to Lieuts. Hogan, Shaw, Doughty.* Some doings eh what. Glorious hate this evening.

9th November 1916

Sundry artillery strafes but nothing very interesting.

10th November 1916

Great day. Bty got heavily shelled with 8.2 this morning. They had to leave the guns and get out for an hour. Blew everything to blazes but never got the guns. Had a strafe this afternoon.

11th November 1916

Very misty today. No good for observing so kicked about the OP all day. Admiring the scenery etc. Down to the mess tonight and the major insisted on Faulkner and myself tossing to see who goes down

to the Waggon Line for 2 days to let Robertson come up and I lost so down I go the day after tomorrow. Rotten luck but it's a toss.

12th November 1916

Very misty again. Sundry Bombardments all day. Becks, Harvey, Allan and Hassel went west last night.

13th November 1916

Huh-bloomin-ray. Nothing doing about the W.L. Robertson came up all right but we've just got orders to shift to the other side of Flers so I stay up and do some more work. Very misty, no good for observation.



Infantry from the 2nd Battalion, Auckland Regiment, New Zealand Division near Flers.

14th November 1916

Gee Wizz, what a Hell of a time. We attacked early this morning. Got dashed sudden orders, but hopped into it to time. Results very satisfactory. Our chaps took Bayonet trench, while the Guards had a big advance capturing over 3000 prisoners. On our little sector we took about 700. Bty got Hell today. The whole detachment went west or nearly all. Strafed a Hun aeroplane that happened to come down in their lines also sprayed the road to Thillooy with shrapnel, and the ambulance was wanted several times. Got pasted with 5.9 and 8.2 ourselves later on, but all is still merry and bright. Had another attack tonight but don't know how we got on. Fancy it was OK.

15th November 1916

Bitterly cold. Huns threw over hundreds of Gas shells this morning early, result, we had to wear gas bags for an hour or two. Visited new Position this morning. Rotten 'Posy'. Can't call it anything else. Absolutely unapproachable by road. Horses just sink out of sight in the mud and slush of the shell craters. Got bogged of course. Visited HQ this afternoon. The officer of the returning Bty staying with us.

16th November 1916

Handed over to returning Bty at OP. Reported to new Position during the afternoon and took over four guns etc. Bitterly cold. Major got over late at night.

17th November 1916

Major crack on the head. 'Knocked' Funny things that happened . . . *18th November 1916 to 8th February 1917 [These pages are pinned into the diary.]* Don't remember much about getting knocked with the exception of seeing a beautiful 'solar' sun then somebody turned out the light. Got to the 8th General Hospital in Rouen after being carried out from the line during a snow storm and after a short 14 hours there, was sent direct to England via Boulognestraat on the way across. Channel run Hospital ship picked up survivors of the City of Mexico, a steamer which had just been sunk by a Hun Sub. Managed to get a glimpse of the Sub, but it didn't molest us. Arrived in Southampton and was put in 'Z' ward and got special attention. Thanks to it and decent constitution managed to get out in three weeks or so. Also able to get out of going to a Convalescent Home, but got a fortnight leave instead. Met the train and went to Manchester. Stayed at 48 M R then went back to London for another Board. Stayed out with Capt. Richardson whom I met in Hospital. Had a gorgeous time. Was given another weeks leave and made the most of it. Had Xmas dinner with Dr. John Broadbent. Left for Perham Downs about New Year time. Tried to get straight back to France from London but no go. After annoying everybody and with assistance managed to get away on the 1st. Went up to London at night. Left the next morning for Portsmouth. Stayed at the South Western while awaiting a boat. Visited Capt (I of M) one day. Left next day for Le Harve. Detained there for five days also received a request which was sent by the CO on Dec 31st for my return to the Bty in reply to my application to be sent back. Swore a few. Major worked a good scheme and we got to Le Harve by passenger boat. Got to Rouen and told that it would be at least seven days before we could get back to our unit. Anyhow we were desperate and by further scheming managed to get back on the 8th via Paris and Amiens. Had a great 24 hours in Paris. Saw quite a good bit of the city. General Brown motored us from Amiens to our HQ. Find on my return that we are made into a 6 gun Bty and have another officer available to us. Cooper is his name. Anyhow here we are and Hurrah for more strafe.

9th February 1917

Went up to the Bty today also reported to Brigade HQ. Ordered to rejoin the old 9th again. Saw Chas who has been in Hospital since I left with flu. Got back to W.L. again and got packed up and ready to move to the Bty. Bitterly cold.

10th February 1917

Left W.L. this morning for the Battery. Got up there in time for a strafe. Had to leave the position twice because the Hun made things too hot. Still bitterly cold. Snow and ice everywhere.

11th February 1917

Firing all night. Got shelled again this afternoon but no damage done. Saw Chas again today. Everything OK here only bitterly cold. Strafed a machine gun tonight.

12th February 1917

Left Bty at 11.30 am and walked down to W.L. Intend staying down for a few days to adjust sundry things. Still as cold as Charity.

13th February 1917

Still cold. Getting to work on organising my W.L. Sundry artillery hates but nothing much doing.

14th February 1917

Still at W.L. Went down to the new W.L. this afternoon. Coming home met the major who imparted the rotten news that I am to remain down from the guns for another 2 or 3 days. Big raid on our front tonight by 'us'.

15th February 1917

Reorganising like blazes or trying to.

16th February 1917

Exciting day. Early this morning a patrol of Huns raided us. Set fire to a big ammunition dump on our right, and all day its been going good, just like a Guy Fawkes night display. The Taubes got awful cheeky. Came right down close to the ground and strafed our roads rather well with machine guns.

Down at the new W.L. getting thing ship shape. Quite a Spring day today. Colonel Burgess presented with the Legion of Honour.

17th February 1917

Raining like blazes. Mud knee deep everywhere. Just about finished at W.L. Off up to the guns tomorrow.

18th February 1917

Rode up to the Guns this morning. Nothing much doing with the exception of getting bogged. One or two small hates. Otherwise quiet.

19th February 1917

A bit of a war on today. Had afternoon with Chas. Mud glorious.

20th February 1917

Brigade F.O.O. today. Went up to the Front Line and had a bit of a war on my own. Trenches thigh deeps in mud and water. Tried to register Z barrage but couldn't get communication. Having another go tomorrow. Got lost coming home owing to mist. Another stint tonight.

21st February 1917

Major came up today. Cooper returned to W.L. Went up with Major Rogers to register Z barrage. Got caught in a Hun barrage and had a couple of hours side stepping in the mud. Registered all right although a sniper nearly got one hit in that I know of. Mud still glorious. Got back to Bty late. Wet through of course.

22nd February 1917

Down at Bty all day. Still wet and muddy. Reported to a new O.S tonight. Old one full of gas. On liaison duty.

23rd February 1917

Spent a comfortable night last night, I don't think. Got shelled early this morning of course. No gas shells though, for which many thanks. Sundry hates all day.

24th February 1917

Great fun last night. Just going to bed when Mr Hun started making things uncomfortable by bombarding the Bty with 8.2 Hows. Awfully exciting while it lasted. Had to get all the gun crews into funk pits while the Major, Richardson and myself beat a hasty retreat into the telephone pit, until the bombarding was over. He gave us a half an hour excitement then evidently satisfied himself. Made another attempt to get to bed, but he started again so had to crawl out again and he had another little bit of fun.

25th February 1917

Up all night awaiting a stunt that didn't come off. At least it came off but without us adding to the fun of the show. Our infantry on the right had an advance but met with no opposition but we had to stand to all night in case we were wanted. Passed the night in preparing several suppers and consuming same. Went up forward this afternoon. Got bogged umpteen times. Also paid particular attention to by a Hun machine gun which gave us a good run for our money over a sunken road 2 feet deep in slush. Got up to an advance Lewis Gun Position and spotted a lovely target which I hope to have a good say in blowing out. Its a nice bit of work, a brand new trestle bridge in Le Transloy. Have more to say about it later I hope. Saw a nice bit of Hate at 8.00 also got something back. Got back to battery late.

26th February 1917

Damn everybody, particularly Brigade HQ. Received orders late last night to report to 7th Bty for duty. That means I am transferred from the 9th. The major has just strafed BHQ but to no avail so its a case of obeying orders like a 'good' soldier and lumping it. Have exhausted all my swear words so won't say any more but will endeavour with the Major's help to do things and it also means that that bridge doesn't get strafed. Rotten luck. Reported to 7th Bty Captain Crisp OC. Ordered to report to 14th Inf Bde HQ. Came up here. Am acting as Liaison Officer. Believe I am here for a week. This is

quite a change from getting bogged in the trenches. Am quite a glorified telephonist now-a-days. Relieved Capt Manton of the 8th.

27th February 1917

Took it out of Mr Hun today. Must strafe somebody. Turned the heavies on to some of his batteries who had the cheek to drop a few about. Got quite a decent crowd here, Brigadier-General is CO and is an awfully decent chap. Rumour has it that our friend Mr Hun is evacuating the line here. Just trying to emulate our stunt at Anzac but I'll wager quite a lot that it isn't as successful. Anyhow hope he is in no hurry because I want to be in the dash forward, if there is a dash. Have always wanted a real good 'go' in the open. Leaving with the Staff Captain. Wisdong, a Sydney chap.

28th February 1917

Another war today. Caught a few around Cemetery Circle. Artillery hates all day. Gas alarm tonight; also a Hell of a scrap on the left. Enjoying things generally.



Beaulencourt

1st March 1917

Up early this morning to relieve the Brigade Major Things quiet generally this morning. Things slightly different this afternoon. Evidently the Huns had a big relief on and they came along a road to the right of Beaulencourt. Got word through from BOP and put the Batteries on to them and didn't they get it in the neck. Got a ripping report from the Inf. Major. Got right into a patrol of over a hundred, and didn't they get it. Several other patrols came along later and they also got a contribution. Gas alarm tonight. They sent over gas shells round Bty 2 but it didn't reach this far.

2nd March 1917

Fairly quiet morning misty and inclined to rain. Got a call from the Front Line this afternoon 'Ye Gods of Angels in Heaven. Will you send over a few bars of love' which amplified meant that the Huns were manning Heaven Trench (their Front Line) and would we open fire. We did. Result quite a lot got Huns. Later At 8.10 our worthy friends attacked Runsay Trench which we pinched from them last night. The guns got going 2 minutes after the first S.O.S. went up. Result again they got it well in the neck. Just got a report from the Front Line, and it says that the attack completely broke down under our fire. One Hun Company of friends were bagged to a man.

3rd March 1917

Very wintry today. Sundry artillery 'Hates' but nothing much doing. Tonight we had two gas alarms. The first was a 'dud' but the second was O.K. only shell gas though. Was pretty thick up here for a time but nothing to worry about.

4th March 1917

Managed to get my hair cut today. Not before I wanted it either. Still cold, but fine. Artillery hates all day. Very heavy shelling on the right early this morning. An awfully funny thing happened with a patrol of ours consisting of 4 men. They were out in NML (no man's land) and got caught by a Hun

Patrol of 40 who took them prisoners anyhow both parties got lost in the mist, finally they all walked into our own lines, and we bagged 40 Huns without a casualty.

5th March 1917

Up at 3 A.M. to relieve the Brigade Major and Staff Capt. Snowing like blazes. Glorious sight outside. Very heavy fall this time. Have just got a glorious fire going so it can snow quick and hard if it likes. Decent sort of a day after the fall, so decent that quite a number of Tanks came over and provided us with a little amusement. Sundry hates all day.

6th March 1917

Sundry aeroplane stunts today. Our planes sank 3 Taubes and they got one of ours which isn't a bad percentage for us. Had a visit from Shaw today. Believe we shift from here tomorrow sometime. Pestered with a few 5 gs about 1pm, but got a Bty to work and it put a stop to their pranks.

7th March 1917

Up early this morning getting ready for our shift. Left old Bde HQ and came over to this one. En route had rather an exciting time. Four of us the G, Major, S.C. and myself were sneaking along when the Huns sent over a few salvos of 4.2 Two came too close for us to get the splinters but the G and I both slopped a bump of earth apiece. Nothing but bruises though. The rotten part about it though is that the explosion made out ears ring like fury. As a matter of fact mine are still ringing as though I'd swallowed a gigantic telephone something or another. Got rather decent quarters down here. Sundry hates all day, but over too quick for any decent work.

8th March 1917

Nothing much doing with the exception of getting an occasional burst of Shrapnel over and snowing like blazes.

9th March 1917

An occasional strafe and more snow about. Nothing much doing.

10th March 1917

Cooper came up to relieve me today. Said 'cheerio' to BHQ Staff, après lunch and reported to Bty via Ginchy. Got strafed with wizz bangs and 8.2 coming down. Called into HQ and reported to CO. Received instruction from OC. Capt Crisp to relieve Healy at WL. Left guns moved about 4pm into the 9th WL and caught some mail. Arrived at 7th WL late.

11th March 1917

Getting a knowledge of things with Healy. Had a ride into Albert this afternoon. Visited the Officers Club there and had afternoon tea. Got mounted on a rather fiery stead which did its best to throw me.

12th March 1917

Healy left for Bty this morning so I'm down here for a while. Nothing much doing. Rather quiet, but the mud is still thick. Caught some more mail today.

13th March 1917

Raining like blazes as per usual. Rode up to the 9th's WL this evening and had dinner with Faulkner. Got back about 8.30pm. Rode the SM horse. Some charger.

14th March 1917

Still raining and mud knee deep everywhere.

15th March 1917

Working like a Trojan getting things square. Mud still gloriously soupy and still raining.

16th March 1917

Better day today. Very heavy bombardment on both left, right and centre.

