

[Continued from file "DIARIES7.DOC"]

Bert Henson Diary No 4 1918-1919

Friday August 9 1918 Camp Couin There has really been nothing worth recording the last few days. Have had some rain but the weather is now fine again. The last couple of days I have visited the dentist, but he was so busy that it was not till yesterday that he could give me attention. A certain amount of training 9.30 a.m. till 11.45 a.m., 1.30 till 2.30 p.m. has been done. I have taken things pretty easily. This morning I got a P. Buzzer from Div and delivered a dissertation on it to the coy signals. We are to move up into the line tomorrow. Good news continues to come regarding the advance south of Albert, and S.E. of Amiens.

Saturday August 10 Couin to trenches Rossignol Wood A very fine summer day. Visited the baths in the morning and then waited for the time when we would start on the tramp up to the line. At the suggestion of one of the boys I tried a new way of carrying overcoat, Hun sheet etc. On the march I found it made it half as easy. Started off at about 1.30 p.m. and taking things easy, having several spells, one at a YMCA where we regaled our selves with lime juice, biscuits and chocolate, got up to the hdqrs of the 1st battalion Dinks, whom we were to relieve, about 5 p.m. Have quite a good dug-out. From Couin, Ted Arnold and James went back to train the res', and Hall went away to a P.B. and loop wireless course this morning.

Sunday August 11 Trenches Rossignol Weather is perfect. Fritz is fairly "hostile" to people going up to W.W.C. He snipes and indulges in m.g. hate, especially on a part of Fish Alley. One chap in W.W.C., Collier from L'r Hutt, was killed this morning and several have been wounded, including a couple of our battalion runners. This afternoon I received another letter from home, dated May 26. Delayed slightly. As we came in yesterday we passed some Yank Stokes gunners going out after having strafed the Hun.

Monday August 12 1918 Trenches Rossignol Day very fine. More minnie activity. More retaliation. This evening I went with Oscar round front line up to W.W.C. hdqrs. While there the Boche gave a "minnie" demonstration round about. Other than to cut the coy phone wire, no damage resulted. Very excellent reports continue to come through concerning the push. Captures exceed 25,000 prisoners and 500 guns. The French are 6 miles beyond Montdidier.

Tuesday August 13 Trenches Rossignol A beautiful summer day. Perhaps rather warm. The Hun has been rather troublesome with minnies, small and large and there has been a good deal of retaliation on our part. Despite this "minnie" activity I think there has not been more than a couple of casualties through them. Word came through from Brigade yesterday morning about 10 a.m. that the Div on our right had reported 700 Huns moving east, with packs up. Also that the usual ration carriers had not come up and that enemy activity was

much below normal. Seems to suggest that Fritz intends to withdraw along this part. Delighted today to receive about a dozen snaps taken round Oban when Bill and I were there. And a letter from K.G., also one from A.G. Wallace was [illegible] cheered "some."

Wednesday August 14 Trenches Rossignol 9 a.m. The Hun has "vamoosed" from in front of us! At 7.30 this morning W.W.C. reported no sign of Hun opposite. Patrols were sent out and at present they working forward over 500 yards forward and are not in touch with Fritz. It was Otago on our right who first reported this morning that they had patrols forward and no sign of enemy and that our M.G's were firing on their men. Thereafter at 7.30 a.m. the above. Our observers report fires in Hun dug-outs. 1/Auck reports Hun still on left of their front. Quite interesting! 11 p.m. Headquarters still in same place. Our patrols are now on outskirts of Puisieux, and people on our right are beyond Serre village. From 8 prisoners from 164 I.R. brought in here by our chaps at 8 p.m. tonight following information gleaned besides other. Enemy intends withdrawing to main line understood near Agniet-le-Petit, this to be done by successive stages, each of 48 hrs. One or two Hun batteries were active this afternoon on front line and Serre Ridge.

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Saturday August 17 1918 Trenches Rossignol Wood I have headed these last few pages Rossignol on account of the fact that we are near to that wood. There is no village of that name here. Rossignol Wood is ahead of the village of Gommecourt. I had rather a rotten night with tooth ache and this afternoon went down to the dentist at Souastre. He took the temporary stopping out of the tooth which had been attended to by the dentist at Couin. Said that this should give me relief and gave me an appointment for Monday. Canteens are now rationed in certain articles now, for instance cigarettes, upon the basis of the strength of the unit to which it belongs, and it is therefore hard to obtain these articles from any but the canteen of one's own unit. Was unable to get any in Souastre today. Recvd a letter from A.R. Broomfield.

Sunday August 18 to Gommecourt This afternoon we were relieved by 2/Auckland and about 5 p.m. we went down to the dug-outs in Gommecourt. We are very comfortably situated here, altho' it is rather gloomy and in places a little smelly down below. These are dugouts and long elaborate systems of tunnels which were made and used by the Hun during his occupation of this place. He must have been very secure here in spite of the fact that the place was at certain periods subjected to terrific heavy bombardment. There are scores, nay hundreds, of enormous shell craters all around. The place is being preserved by the French authorities as [blank]

Monday August 19 Gommecourt to Marieux This afternoon shortly after lunch I was instructed to pack up and go down to Marieux to relieve Ted Arnold who was going on leave. He has been training the reserve signallers who are down there. Accordingly I collected my "goods and chattels" and commenced to

"hike it," as the Yanks say. At Souastre I called in at the dentist, but he did little to me as my appointment had been for the following day. Told me to come again Tuesday. From Souastre I

got a lorry to Pas, and from the latter place another to Thievres, from which place I walked to the camp in Marieux Wood. There is a great deal of traffic on the roads, guns, ammunition going, and I hear numerous tanks already - forward. It is expected that the battalion will come back in a week's time.

Tuesday August 20 1918 Marieux Went up to Souastre to the dentist as I had arranged previously. Walked as far as Couin and then got Bagley's bike. Had dinner at the D.R.S. and then when I went along to the dentist found that he could not attend to me owing to his having received orders to pack up. His place was to be used as a dressing station in the stunt pending - told me to go to couin to the other dentist. So I biked me thither and endured a miserable half hour of drilling and filling at the hands of the Baby Bliss-like and not over-gentle dentist there. However, got the job done alright (I trust).

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Sunday August 25 Marieux Church parade at 11 a.m. this morning. After lunch Ambrose Long, Innes and I set out for Beauval. After a little delay caught a lorry from the village and after a couple of changes got into Doullens. Seemed most unusual to find no Yanks there. In the shops was displayed a fair amount of fruit. Grapes at 3 francs per kilo. We caught a lorry from Doullens and got into Beauval a little after 3 p.m. The village, which is a fair size, boasts of a fine church of modern architecture, but there's little else worth seeing. We had a meal of eggs and chips and met some more of the boys. We left about 8 p.m. and rode in lorries all the way. The day was very fine but rain came on about 10 p.m.

Monday August 26 Marieux Day has been fine. This afternoon the fellows went to Sarton for a bath. I went to Couin to get some gear out of my pack. Had a bath there. Got my boots soled and one or two little jobs done by the tailor. Had tea there and then till after eight enjoyed a little cricket. From the baths caught a lorry back to the camp. James and Coulston turned up this morning. Believe they had rather a wild evening in Beauval. Each day now one sees French people moving up with their cart-loads of miscellaneous effects to their old homes recently released by the advance. They lose very little time in getting back. Their lot is a very hard one.

Tuesday August 27 Marieux The usual inspections and training. The day was generally overcast and several light showers fell. In the afternoon there was carried out a miniature stunt manoeuvre. I did not go out on this. Went down to the village to the signal stores to try to exchange dud Lucas batteries, but was unsuccessful.

Rain came on again in the evening. I tried to settle down to writing but with indifferent result. Seem to be right off it. The news from the front is still good, but we have not yet secured Bapaume. Another push has been made up Arras way and considerable success attained. Capt White and Padre Walls have been wounded. Mr Lee killed.

Wednesday August 28 1918 Marieux Heavy rain fell this morning and beyond the usual inspection no training was done. Speaking to a runner who had come down I learnt that the battalion was in Grevilliers and having a fairly busy time. So far all the Batn Sigs are OK. Believe they have a great collection of Hun phones and other signal gear including an amplifier. Other souvenirs abound. Wish I were up there. Have returned from the P.B. and no amplifier. School at Argouilles today.

Thursday August 29 Marieux camp Training as usual during parade hours. We are supposed to get in an hour's specialist training in the morning and another hour in the afternoon - that's according to syllabus, but I generally get the chaps for about two and a-half hours in the mornings and disregard the syllabus. What the signallers I have here require most is specialist training, not drill and bayonet fighting. News from forward is still good. Our fellows are now beyond Bapaume.

Friday August 30 Marieux Went to the dentist at Souastre this morning and got a stopping in one of my molars. The dentist a big chap of about 18 stone was not particularly gentle and I had not a great deal of confidence in his skill and workmanship. However it possibly will be OK. Hall who had returned from a school and Matthews and Evernden, both back from leave, went up to the line today. The railway running through Couin is being put in better condition for heavier traffic. Don't know exactly how far it runs up now. Going up I walked to Couin and then got a bike to go on to Souastre. Returning I got on a train at Couin and travelled down to Sarton and from there walked back to camp just in time for tea at 4.30 p.m.

Saturday August 31 1918 Marieux Some NZ mail arrived today. I received two from home. Also I received a note and a magazine from N.W. and a registered packet containing copies of my snapshots taken when on leave, from Kodaks. Generally they have turned out very well. Wrote to Lily and enclosed some prints.

Sunday Sept 1 Marieux Paraded to a church service in the corps entertainment hall in the village at 11 a.m. This afternoon James and I went out to a quiet spot in the fields on the edge of the wood and tried to do some scribbling. The day was fine and sheltered as we were from the wind, the sun was hot. We were greatly annoyed by the small flies which swarmed out of the hedges and finally went out into the fields. Stubble is taking the place of the waving corn, and from a number of fields the grain is being carted in to the farm buildings. Wrote to Q.D. Recvd a letter from Kilby and one from Dib who is at Durrington camp, Wilts. Also received an

Auckland Weekly.

Monday Sept 2            Marieux    Training in the morning as usual while in the afternoon the fellows were down on the rifle range. I did not go down there. Wrote to Dib. Peronne has fallen to us. The day has been rather cold and generally overcast. Mr Ward went up to the battalion yesterday and toured its headquarters in a cellar in Bapaume. Casualties I understand have not been heavy, but the fellows having been in a good while, have found shifting about and pushing and tailing up the Hun rather wearisome. They would welcome a spell.

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Friday Sept 6            Marieux    Today has been washing day. The baths at Sarton have been unable to supply clean changes of under clothing so this [morning?] we got cans, petrol tins etc and boiled and rubbed our clothing. I'm sure my underwear and towels have not had such a scrubbing since they left the mills. The day was beautifully dry and splendid for drying. In the afternoon Jack Laurence and I went down to Thievres and had a dip in the river Authie. Very refreshing.

In the village saw a number of Americans who had just come down from Kemmel. After tea, Laurence, Long and I walked over to Beauquesne where spent an hour or so and returning to camp about 9 p.m. This village also was full of Yanks who had just come in. The countryside looked very pretty tonight. Today we heard that we were to shift up to Bapaume tomorrow but this order was cancelled later. Believe the whole camp shifts on Sunday.

Saturday Sept 7 1918    Marieux    The village (Marieux) looked very deserted when we went thro' it yesterday evening. Corps hdqrs shifted away from here to somewhere forward almost a week ago, and this accounts for its present comparative quietness. The French people are gradually coming back to their old homes about here and farther up and last night we saw several wagons and carts coming up with families and loaded with their goods and chattels. Here of course we are a long way from the line, so far that we don't even hear the big guns, altho' sometimes if the wind is favourable, the rumble of a strafe floats down. Neither do we at night hear much of Fritz's planes - in fact their drone is almost unfamiliar.

Sunday Sept 8            Marieux    There was no church parade this morning, so in spite of the fact that the sky was overcast and almost threatening, Ambrose, Long and I decided to go for a day's ramble. Accordingly we set out about 10 o'clock and down the road a little way scrambled into a lorry which took us into Doullens. Here we found a great many Yanks. We made a few purchases and then caught another lorry into Beauval, intending to go on to Candas, but rain came on pretty heavily, and we decided after a feed of eggs and chips to return to camp. We were in conversation with several Yanks, and of course, amongst other things, we discussed the war. They are jolly fine chaps, of course keen and fresh and very optimistic. Some of them were quite surprised when I ventured the opinion that this business would not be wound up

inside a year. We got back to camp about 3 p.m.

Monday Sept 9            Marieux      We still remain in this camp and orders are that we go tomorrow. 2nd Auckland and party went up today. We had an ordinary parade this morning and one with full pack this afternoon. This evening went with several of the chaps down to the village, had an egg and chip supper and getting back to camp, got to bed in pretty good time for we were to rise early in the morning.

Tuesday Sept 10        Marieux to Bapaume      Reveille went at 4 a.m., breakfast was half an hour later and striking the tents and cleaning the camp, we moved out a little after 6. We marched up the main road to Vauchelles and then struck across to Bell Eglise where we were to entrain. The day was rather rainy with a wintry wind, tho' at times weak sunshine did burst through the clouds for a few minutes. After a dreary wait our train came in, we climbed into the wagons and started. We passed through Colincamps, the village where we dug in when we came down in March, near there saw a C.C.S. and some nurses, then on past our old trenches thro' no-mans-land of but a few weeks ago and on to Puisieux. It seemed strange that but a short time ago fellows had been sitting in trenches, going out on patrol, and now we were riding over it to miles beyond in a train. We reached Bapaume about 5 p.m. and marched up the Arras road to a place about 2000 yards up it where we pitched our tents.

Wednesday Sept 11      Nr Bapaume      We have all been on fatigue today. Some were put on to dig in for the tents, while I was with a party, the work of which was to fix a rifle range and butts. The day was unpleasant. A strong wind with frequent showers. In the evening I went over to a canteen and there was very pleased and surprised to meet Norman Tingey. He is with the entrenching battalion, but is marked "B" at his last medical examination which was today.

Thursday Sept 12        camp nr Bapaume      The weather has been rotten. Dull all day with big black clouds rolling up and bringing their showers. The wind which has been strong and cold has added to the unpleasantness of the day. Our hours of parade have altered. Reveille is now at 6 a.m., breakfast 7 a.m. and parade from 8 till noon. There is no parade in the afternoon. Believe the battalion which has been out, moved in again today. Major Hume ("Pullthro") has been wounded. Seriously I hear. Charlie Bargh has been awarded the M.M. Understand the boys of the section are still OK. There's a rumour about that the Division was to "hop over" this morning but so far have heard no confirmation. Received from A.R. a packet of p.c views of Glasgow.

Friday Sept 13            camp nr Bapaume      Have been carpentering today. Started at 8 a.m. and finished about 3 p.m. We built (I had a party of 16 men) a couple of sheds for different battalion gear. Material was obtained [from] old buildings around in adjacent villages but a good deal of it had been knocked about. There were several showers today but the strong wind had done much to dry up the ground. There is an old Hun tank down in Bapaume which I must go down to see. I understand that the Div is coming out in a day or so and will be camping somewhere about this part. At midday a big batch of Hun prisoners passed near the camp under escort. They were about 700

in number and I understand were captured in Bourlon Wood. 'Tis bon m'sieur.

Saturday Sept 14 1918 camp nr Bapaume I did not go over to see the prisoners as they passed yesterday but I heard fellows say that they were mostly very young. I also heard that the equal of 2 divisions had been captured. Taking advantage of the favourable wind, a great number of little balloons carrying propaganda leaflets were liberated from near Bapaume last evening. I counted about 15 in the air at one time. On these little balloons is a mechanism which after a certain time from their release, operate and liberate these leaflets at intervals. Rumour hath it that the Yanks have made a push down in Alsace and that they have secured 25000 prisoners. This evening I went to a concert given in the adjacent YM by a party from the Warwicks. It was a really god show. A plane landed through engine trouble near the camp and got slightly bent in the process. I secured part of the broken propeller.

Sunday Sept 15 Biefvillers Church parade has been in the YMCA marquee this morning. The after sundry little jobs about the camp after lunch we packed up and moved over to the new camp near Biefvillers. The battalion having come out yesterday, arrived down here about 2 p.m. The boys are all looking well. Gin Bowie has been evacuated slightly gassed. Bill Berry is down at St Valery having a rest and Taylor is on leave. Had a letter from Ted Arnold yesterday. He is at Codford. Sick. We are accommodated here in bivvies and also some in tents. It is rather a bleak spot but should be alright providing the weather remains fine. Tonight saw a Hun bombing plane coming down in flames a mile or so away. The searchlights picked it up and one of our planes squirted some lead into it.

Monday Sept 16 Biefvillers There was great cheering in all the camps about when the Hun plane came down in flames last night. Searchlights around are very numerous. Counted 16 the other night. It was one of our night-flying patrol machines that brought it down. There was a great display of green and other rockets as the Hun flaming, dropped. Out of the piece of propeller blade I got yesterday I propose making the base of an ink stand.

In the recent stunt the Section picked up a Hun amplifier, a wireless set, transmitting and receiving, and a separate tuner. Telefunken. I did not take part in this afternoon's training, but with the help of James, put up an aerial and got the tuner into working order. The maximum wave-length is 800 metres but I have been able to pick up numerous stations.

Tuesday Sept 17 Biefvillers We experienced an exceptionally heavy storm last night, torrential rain and vivid and incessant lightning. We got partly flooded out in our bivvy. The roof leaked and the rain drove in under the door. Others fared even worse. A number of the Coy chaps had the morning off to enable them to get their things dry. Training was carried out 9 till 11.30 a.m., 1.30 till 3 p.m. I was not on the afternoon parade. Instead I interested myself with the wireless which is working very satisfactorily. I have my aerial strung from a telegraph pole to a mast I've erected. This evening

has been fine and moonlight. Saw yet another Hun night bomber brought down in flames, this time by anti-aircraft guns.

Wednesday Sept 18 Biefvillers It might be worth noting here that when I was at the other camp near here Fritz planes were very hot after our observation balloons, and to an extent was successful. I saw several come down in flames. This afternoon at about 3 p.m. I picked up on

the wireless part [? word indecipherable] of the Hun official. It was in German but owing to noise outside and the fact that bosch letters were used I did not get it complete. I must swot up the Continental code and get it in full another afternoon. This evening I got about half a coil of good copper wire which I will use for an aerial.

Thursday Sept 19            Biefvillers    The Coy chaps do not now parade with the battalion section for training, so this morning I potted about with my wireless installation, putting up a new aerial etc. Should get improved signals. Tomorrow there is to be an inspection of the battalion by the G.O.C. Consequently this afternoon we paraded and messed about until we exceeded the point of exasperation. This evening I went out with "Os K" and met Norman Tingey. Also saw Wally White and Spencer (?) Ingham. Then returning to camp I spent an hour or two polishing for the morrow's stunt.

Friday Sept 20 1918    Beifvillers    It's an almost criminal absurdity that troops likely to have to move forward at an hour's notice should have to polish the brass parts of our equipment and uniform as we have had to do. "Make yourself as conspicuous to the Hun as you can" seems to be the idea, a folly which might mean the death of many a man. The Yanks, the Australians, the French and even the Hun are far more sensible in this respect. The battalion paraded this morning and were inspected by the C.O. who announced that owing to the arrival of Lord Milner at Div Hdqrs, the G.O.C. would not inspect us till the afternoon. Again we paraded at 3 p.m. and this time were inspected by the G.O.C., Gen Russell. He expressed great satisfaction with the turnout: also with the recent work of the battalion. Weather showery.

Saturday Sept 21        Biefvillers    After the recent polishing and inspections, today we enjoyed relaxation. Parade 9 a.m. clean fatigue and for a while were engaged cleaning up about camp. Then we marked out a ground for the afternoon's football. A couple of Yank teams in the apres midi gave an exhibition of baseball. I went to the baths and unfortunately missed it. However, after tea I went over and watched a Rugby match between 1st Wellington and our battalion. It was a good game and resulted in a win for 1st battalion by 8 to nil. The weather recently has been wintry. Strong equinoctial gales have prevailed under these conditions rain frequent also - the rather desolate countryside has presented and even more miserable appearance.

Sunday Sept 22            Biefvillers    A combined church service 1st and 2nd Wellington battalions was held at 9.30 a.m. The morning was fairly fine but the afternoon and evening turned out rotten. Rainy and blustery. Yesterday I received a letter from Dib to say he was about to leave with a draft for France. Tom Bullick received one from him dated a couple of days later saying he was at the Base in France, and today he turned up here in person. He is at the entrenching battalion but hopes to get back here tomorrow. He is overjoyed at the prospect of once more being in the old section. Yesterday afternoon I went over with Oscar Johnson and the Otago padre to put a cross on his brother's grave which is quite near the camp. He fell on 25th ult and is the second brother Oscar has lost. It's indeed hard.



Monday Sept 23 1918    Biefvillers    I don't think I have yet recorded the fact that on yesterday week I saw Bob Ferguson as he was going off a church parade. He is in "A" Coy 1st Dinks and is looking very well.

Went to the baths at Bihucourt this morning. On my return saw Sam Hardy in the adjacent camp 1st Wellington. He is still quite OK. A reinforcement draft came from the entrenching group to us this morning and with them "Dib." He is delighted at being back with the battalion once more and indeed we are pleased to have him. With the draft came a number of new signallers. This afternoon we were on the rifle range till 5.30 p.m. There is a number of nurses at the C.C.S. adjacent. Several passed the camp this evening. Quite a refreshing sight.

Tuesday Sept 24        Biefvillers    I have been spelling the above village incorrectly. However this is correct now. Last evening the hitherto cold strong wind died down. There is a promise of milder better weather and it will be much appreciated. This morning was beautifully summer-like with a gentle breeze. We were out on a tactical scheme round Loupart Wood. We of Hdqrs represented the defending machine-gunners. The Coys attacked. It was about this part that the battalion actually advanced in the recent stunt. We passed through Grevillers which is now but a heap of ruins. Returned to camp about 2 p.m. Later Oscar and I went over and fixed up his brother's grave a bit. Just before tea Dib and I went and had a look around Bapaume, which is only about ten minutes' walk distant.

Wednesday Sept 25     nr Biefvillers    Bapaume is now merely a heap of ruin and devastation. A second Ypres tho' of course much smaller. Near the station yards saw and examined a couple of German tanks captured in the recent push. They are big ungainly things protected by much heavier armour than are our tanks. Each carried one small gun besides m'guns. Our tanks are much more mobile. The Hun is a poor copy. Saw one of our bombing planes come down near here at about 11 last night. I had been writing. It dropped numerous flares and as it got lower burnt magnesium (?) sticks to enable the pilot to see his landing place. I went over to it and found that it had made a fair landing although the under-gear and one or two stays had smashed. Engine trouble. No one hurt.

Thursday Sept 26        Biefvillers    Lecture on cipher this morning. Visual station scheme in afternoon. Dib introduced some of his method - developed in sling! The old Hun was over last night and dropped a few bombs some distance away. During the last week there have been numerous evidences of an intending stunt up this way. Train-loads of tanks and numerous guns have passed through. Our planes have been very active. Fritz has scored several more of our observation balloons. It is rumoured the stunt comes off in the morning (27th). The 2nd Brigade moved out forward tonight and I think we also leave this camp tomorrow. Saw Norm Tingey "ce soir."

Friday Sept 27            Biefvillers      News came thro' last night that a big "push" had been launched between Verdun and Rheims and was progressing well. Also that Gen Allenby's forces had captured 40,000 Turks. Don't know whether these are in addition to a similar number announced in the paper a day or so ago.      The battalion paraded at 10.30 a.m. in fighting kit. We were told that the stunt about Cambrai had commenced this morning and was progressing favourably. Bourlon Wood had been taken. Regarding our proposed [illegible] orders were not difficult. It was expected some time in the afternoon. Meantime we were to be in readiness. We hung about all day and at about 6 p.m. word came that we would not go till early tomorrow morning, and then in buses. I have been recommended as a candidate for a commission and all going well I will possibly in a couple of months find myself at an O.T.C. at Cambridge or Oxford on about a 7 months' course.

Saturday Sept 28            Biefvillers      From Hdqrs Dib, Hardy and Stewart have been recommended for the O.T.C. Oscar would not accept it just now, so my name was put in his stead. It will mean my being away from this business for about 9 months. Norman Tingey was over last night. He went before a medical board a day or so ago and was marked PBC2. This means for him Rouen or Blighty.      Up at 3 a.m. this morning. A cup of tea but it was not until about 5.30 a.m. that we got started away in the lorries. Reached Neuville shortly after 7 a.m. where we got out and went on a little farther where the cooks with their gear, having gone on last night, had breakfast ready for us at 8 a.m. Nothing doing all day until 4 p.m. when orders came for us to move up to attack tomorrow morning. Moved out at 5 p.m. and passing Haplincourt Wood and Trescault, arrived about dark at a position in the Hindenburg line. We hop over early in the morning. Not much sleep if any tonight.

Sunday Sept 29 1918      La Vacquerie Valley      Our position in the Hindenburg line last night was just west of La Vacquerie Valley. It was in a very deep sunken road or ravine impossible for tanks to cross. Very strong position. At 12.30 a.m. we moved up to a position just across the Cambrai railway and on the western slope of the La Vac' Valley. Here in an old Hun dugout we established a hdqrs. Took us a long time to get up in the dark. At half past three the boys hopped over and the barrage commenced. I remained on the rear hdqrs. Dib took a party forward with wire. Prisoners soon were pouring in.

[The diary ceases until October 9]

Wednesday Oct 9            La Vacquerie      We had planned a busy morning reeling and repairing salvaged wire, and also some of us were going over to put poor old Tom Bullick's grave in decent order. In fact some of the boys did go over to complete what they had started yesterday when the order came that we were to be ready to move at half an hour's notice. Well I suppose this had been the case with us right along. The warning soon had confirmation, and about 10.45 a.m. we moved out forward. Marched over the ground we had covered on the 29th ult., across the Cambrai - St Quentin (?) road, through the recently much battered village of Crevecoeur, across the magnificent canal and eastward toward Caudry. Some couple of miles past the canal we halted for the night and bivouacked in the fields. We of the Sigs got a posy against a battery of abandoned 77's belonging to No 19 Feld-art Regt III Batt.

Thursday Oct 10 Got a fair night's sleep altho' we were packed like sardines. Anyhow, we kept warm. The morning proved misty and unpromising but the afternoon turned out perfect. Last night there were numerous glows in the sky, reflections of the fires the Hun was setting as he fell back. Here we were beyond the area of devastation or practically so. There were of course a few shell holes here and there, but really nothing to mention. At 2.30 p.m. we moved off forward. Crossing the main Cambrai railway which had been very thoroughly blown about by explosives, we marched across country, through fields of sward and crops, marigolds, turnips, etc, past un-despoiled and pretty little villages, which to all of us on this beautiful afternoon was an excellent tonic. It was hard to realise fully that we had left trenches and the old warfare behind. We arrived at Beauvais about 5 p.m. and billeted.

Friday Oct 11 1918 Beauvais is fair sized place and it was very little damaged. We billeted in a house in one of the streets and got very comfortably settled. The civilians had evidently not had time to get much of their belongings before the Hun authorities hustled them away back. Houses were fully furnished, though contents of boxes and drawers were generally strewn about by the Hun soldiers I suppose before they buzzed off. The houses were of a good class. In many of them were pianos, gramophones, etc. We slept well on spring mattresses last night, though only till 3 a.m. this morning. Shortly after this hour we moved forward to Haucott (?) farm about a couple of miles ahead. Weather was rather drizzling and dull. Ran a wire to 1st Auck. About 8.30 a.m. picked up gear and moved a few hundred yards to another farm where we remained till about 4 p.m. when we moved up to 2nd Auck's old position. 42nd Div came onto our farm. A weedy crowd. Had to dig in in new posy.

Saturday 12 Oct Rations were rather short yesterday but we made up the deficiency by cooking some potatoes, carrots, onions etc which we got from the farm buildings and the garden. Some feed! Our own cooks had not come up. We are in support to Auck and 1st Wgtn, but as they have done and are still doing well we do not anticipate going farther up. Our disposition here is some

distance from the Hun and it is quiet. He put a few shells back [in] this locality last night, or rather in the evening. The came over pretty lazily, evidently from about extreme range. They being 77's, that would be about 10,000 yards. Numerous glares illuminated the sky last night. More of his dumping works preparatory to further withdrawal. As we came up on Thursday we observed many clouds of smoke on the horizon and also several explosions. He has blown great craters on several of the roads about here. This afternoon we were relieved by the 42nd Div and about 4 p.m. set off for Longsart. The Int Offr took us for a tramp across country. Solid going and ploughed fields. Glad to get to our billets - old Hun sheets - about 7 p.m.

Sunday Oct 13 Longsart We are quite comfortably settled here. Good low huts set in a bank alongside a road, beaucoup straw to lie on. Altogether OK. There has been a drizzle part of the day. A little muddy underfoot. Our dear old adjutant, Dallinger, beloved (?) by all, got us out on fatigue, cleaning up about hdqrs this morning first thing. We all felt hostile and resentful.

Dally is a d--d old rotter, and old staff sgt major full of bluster and bite, ignorant in speech and manner. Will be pleased to see the last of him. News is decidedly cheerful. The Hun seems to be rather anxious after peace. The reply of President Wilson to the recent peace feeler is quite good. Seems to meet with all-round approval. We want no patchy peace with "our dear friends the Germans" now. It's our time. Let the devils pay for their mischief. In the last seven weeks the British have captured 110,000 prisoners and 200 guns. Stuff to gie'em!. Received a big mail tonight. 8 letters. 2 from Katie, 1 each from Q.D., M.D., P. Mills, E.P.B., M.N., Parenga. I'm highly elated.

Monday Oct 14 1918 Longsart The "B" team fellows rejoined us yesterday afternoon. The event of the day was the visit of the Prince of Wales to our locality. Shortly after 2 p.m. we lined an adjacent road and shortly after H.R.H. came along on horse-back. It was quite an informal affair. He was greeted with cheers by the mob (who amusing to relate were given the tip to give vent to their lungs!). The prince still looks young and rather bashful and nervous of such affairs even tho' they be of an informal nature. He was accompanied by a number of NZ staff, including Gen. Russell. Col. Cunningham, who went away sick when we were at La Vacquerie, is back again with the battalion. There has been much that has happened lately that I have seen that I would like to have recorded but space has not permitted. I hope to mention them anon. The note and snapshots I received from Q.D. had been posted on May 25th 1916. Smart work!

Tuesday Oct 15 Longsart I have a new job now, that of looking after, repairing etc, our instruments. In short, I am the mechanic. This used to be Ted Arnold's job, then when he went away Tom Bullick took it on and now that poor old Tom is gone I have taken it on, at least temporarily, until someone else is found to do it. It's a pretty good thing anyhow. I'm excused all parades, and generally take things pretty easily.

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Thursday Oct 17 Longsart Tom Hogan and I went into Fontaine-au-Pire to Brigade and also to 1st Auck hdqrs. From the latter we got dinner and a phone we had lent them at Crevecoeur, and from Brigade 10 "X" cells of which we were in rather urgent need. Fontaine, which is closely adjoined by Beauvais, is a fair-sized place and is fairly intact. I understand there are a few civilians in it, though I did not see any of them today. Caudry is another fair-sized town not far from here (about 3 miles, I think). There are I believe about 2000 civilians in it. At least this is the number which our intelligence people - before the stunt - expected to find here. Some of the boys who have been over there say it's rather a decent place. The Hun has been shelling it with long-range guns during the last few days. He has also bombed it.

Friday October 18 1918 Longsart A dull foggy morning, but an afternoon on which the sun cleared the mist and shone through most cheerfully. James arrived back from leave and had some glowing accounts of Scotland to delight the boys with. A headquarters team played against Taranaki in football and "put it over them" 6 to nil. D.R.O's today contain a list of decorations awarded to men of the Div for their work in the recent operations. Included I find the name of A.J. Butler, who was with me in the Crevecoeur stunt, and also that of myself. Altogether there is a big list of new medallists in this battalion. Dib was recommended for the D.C.M. for his splendid work in the same stunt but I do not find his name in this list. I sincerely

hope he gets it. If any man has earned it, he has.

Saturday October 19 Longsart My fountain pen has got out of order. The upper part of the nib has broken, and so until I get it repaired, I must perforce resort to lead. The day was dull, misty and wintry. Hdqrs football team played us, W.W.C., this afternoon and secured another victory - result was 8 to nil. The Dinks moved out from Esnes late this afternoon to a stage farther forward. The Div goes into the line again, I understand, in a few days' time, which means that we leave this place soon. I have not yet recorded the excellent war news which came through a day or so ago. Ostend has fallen to naval forces. Lille is pretty well flanked and excellent progress has been made in other parts. Bruges has also been occupied.

Sunday Oct 20 Longsart Another wintry day, gloomy throughout, drizzling rain and several heavy downpours. From 4 p.m. today we were to be ready to move at 2 hours' notice. We had a good deal of wire which we had salvaged to put onto reels and this job occupied the crowd pretty well all day. I found distraction in packing and getting ready the hamper of our gear. The "B" team list is out. Of hdqrs section it includes Berry, Taylor, Askew and myself. I expect we will go to Beauvois Commencing at about 0020 there was intense bombardment up forward. Believe the 42nd Div and others are having a stunt and are progressing well. Well, it's about 2200 and we are still here. Possibly we'll move early in the morning.

Monday Oct 21 1918 Longsart We did not move out today. Training was continued. Hdqrs footballers played Hawkes Bay this afternoon and were again victorious, 5 to nil. They have now defeated 3 coys. There's but Ruahine to play and beat, I trust. Gin again put in a successful kick to convert the try.

Tuesday Oct 22 Longsart to Beauvois We kicked our heels about the camp until 2.50 p.m. (or I suppose I should put it 1450) when the "B" team set off, in heavy marching order, for Beauvois-en-Cambresis. Those of the battalion who are going forward moved out a little earlier for the same village - town I should say, for it is a fair sized place. It adjoins Fontaine. We were taken for a good part across the fields and our heavy load which we haven't been used to lately, found the going pretty solid. We were thankful when we reached the factory in which we, with the other "B" teams of the Brigade are to "reside" for a while. We of hdqrs were not altogether delighted with our billet though. It is on the 4th floor of a big factory bldg and the roof has numerous holes. It is a barn-like place. Managed to "scrounge" straw and had a comfy bunk.

Wednesday Oct 23 Beauvois-en-Cambresis Hear the 42nd had a very successful stunt the other morning and secured about 2000 prisoners. The Hun is now well off the coast and our flank rests on the Dutch frontier. Hear that 15,000 Huns got into Holland and were interned. That's a few less of 'em! Other than a short parade this morning we had the day to ourselves, or practically so. I think I have said that the houses were comparatively intact in the village. That is true to a certain extent, but it is perhaps misleading. The poor people would find their homes in a sorry state if they came back to them now. Furniture and fittings, the contents of

cupboards, drawers, shelves and boxes have been tossed on to the floor wantonly and shamefully. Damnable vandalism!

Thursday Oct 24 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis Bagley came along to my barrack room, my barn-like abode last evening and later we went to the cinema. The show finished at 8 p.m. and I then went along with him to his billet, a very posy little posy in a cottage at the other end of Fontaine, where I found the remainder of the boys. They had done well today, there having arrived numbers of parcels for the various new boys of the section. I was not too late for a taste. They anticipate moving early in the morning. Parades today were 8.45 till 11.45 a.m, 1.30 p.m. to 3 p.m. then finish. Early this morning there was prolonged and intense drum-fire forward. Very solid. This afternoon between 2000 and 3000 prisoners passed this town. There was another very heavy cannonade about 2 p.m. Friday Oct 25 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis The day for the most part has been overcast. Training as usual. We have had great difficulty in obtaining cigarettes here, in fact I have not been able to get any. Have had to go without. The battalion I understand is now in Solemnes where also is Div hdqrs. Hear that the 2nd Brigade have been in a stunt. Nicholson V.C. has been killed. Believe he had the chance of a trip back to NZ but declined it, saying he wanted to see the business through. Jolly hard lines. Tonight I was in luck. At a Tommy canteen (the Manchesters) I secured a couple of packets of Craven A's.

Saturday Oct 26 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis Had no parade this afternoon. Joe Mackie and I went over to Caudry, about a couple of kilos distant. It is a fine little town of a class above the ordinary I've encountered in this part. It shows signs of considerable prosperity in pre-war days. It possesses many fine residences, and the buildings and houses altogether are of good class and style, more modern than the usual to be found in towns of its size. It has numerous big factories in its environs, foodstuffs and textile factories which are now in ruin, or at least the machinery has all been removed or smashed up by the Hun. Saw numerous civilians, also a lorry load of refugees evidently just brought down from the line today. Afternoon was beautifully fine.

Sunday Oct 27 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis There was a great deal of traffic through Caudry and the town presented in the main streets a rather busy scene. A number of Hun prisoners passed through. The town possesses a very fine church which I looked over. Saw Norm Tingey tonight. He has just returned from Blighty leave and is looking for his unit, the entrenching group. He had a great holiday, most of it in Edinboro. This morning there was a church parade, and the rest of the day one was free. Spent the remainder of the day with Norman Tingey. The entrenching group is now broken up but, but the P.B. men who were with it are going down to Etaples. Norman, who is P.B, with them. He expects to go tomorrow. The morning was fine but the afternoon became overcast and rain fell. Wrote Q.D.

Monday Oct 28 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis Norman spent the night up here with me and left about 0700. The following information which I have got off a postal calendar might be worth recording. Population of Beauvois-en-C, 4105; Fontaine-au-Pire, 2486; Caudry, 13380; Crevecoeur-sur-l'Escaut, 1820; Cambrai, 28077; Solesmes, 6247; Marcoing, 1934.

Training as usual today. Went to a picture show in these buildings this evening. On Saturday Horace Reid went up from here to see the Brigadier re his commission. He tells me Dib was also there on a similar mission. Sun shone very genially today. Slush on the roads is drying up splendidly.

Tuesday Oct 29 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis A really fine day. The sun shone most genially. The atmosphere was almost balmy. Taking advantage of these conditions our planes were very busy, both today and this evening. I hear that the 1st Brigade has not gone into the line yet. Also hear that the Hun is putting up fairly stiff resistance in front of the Foret de Mormal. It may prove a fairly stiff obstacle to our chaps. Rumour persists that Austria is endeavouring to obtain a separate peace. I wonder. Allenby has entered Aleppo, a very important place in Palestine. 'tis bon, m'sieur. Wrote to P.W. tonight. Some NZ mail came in for some of the chaps yesterday but none arrived today. What fortune for me tomorrow I wonder.

Wednesday Oct 30 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis We were on musketry this morning and this afternoon most of the signals having been picked for guard and doing a prepdrill, I strolled over to a corps directing [?word] wireless station and spent an interesting hour or two. This evening I went to a picture show and a concert by a Dink party held in the building here. The day has been cold, the wind very nippy. Austria-Hungary is asking for a separate peace, so things look hopeful.

Thursday Oct 31 Beauvois A wintry day. Cold wind and rain. Jack Miles arrived down here from battalion this afternoon. He is going on leave to Blighty. The battalion is still in Solesmes where the boys are having a pretty good time. There is a large number of civilians there. No mail arrived for me yesterday, nor did any come in this afternoon. Joe Ward tells me there is some on the way down from battalion for me. Several instances have occurred recently of the railways being blown up by delayed mines which the Hun had set previous to his falling back.

[Diary continued on file "DIARIES9.DOC"]