

Arthur Davidson (#6/2113), Date of Birth: 24.07.1893, enlisted on 14th February 1915 (age 22)

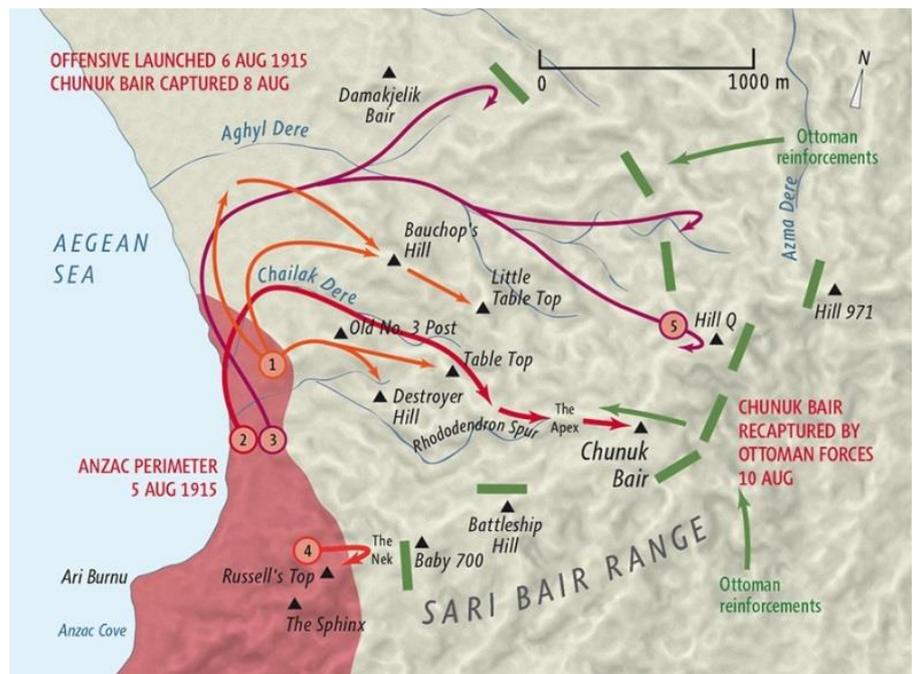
1st Battalion Canterbury Infantry Regiment, 13th Company.



World War I began on 4 August 1914. In October 1914 New Zealand sent 8,500 to Egypt. This was the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF). It was eventually joined by 42 reinforcement drafts. In 1914 New Zealand's population was just over one million, fewer than 250,000 of whom were men of military age. Conscription was introduced from late 1916, but the majority (92,000) of the 124,000 who served, were volunteers. 100,444 soldiers embarked for overseas service, and 59,483 became casualties of whom 18,166 died. 47,902 of those casualties were incurred on The Western Front, including 12,483 dead - an average of over 400 per month. ⁽²⁾

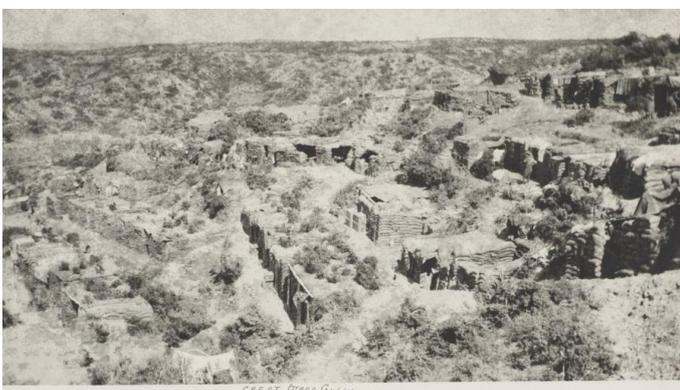
Arthur Davidson was employed by A.S. Elworthy, Timaru (Holme Station, where his brother, Edward was working) when he enlisted on 13th February 1915.

His unit 1st Canterbury, 13th Company left New Zealand on 13th June 1915 and arrived in Egypt on 24th July 1915.



The campaign against the Turks at Gallipoli in the Dardanelles lasted from 25th April 1915 to December 1915. About 8,500 New Zealanders served in two brigades, of whom 7,473 became casualties, including 2,721 dead. The New Zealand Division was making its assault on Chanuk Bair when **Arthur Davidson** arrived at Dardanelles on 9th August 1915. He was wounded between that date and 25th August 1915, when he made an entry in his diary that he left the Dardanelles.

On the night of 19th August at 8.30 p.m., a party of twenty men of the 13th Company (Arthur's Company) under Lieutenant J. B. Le Mottee, made an attempt to destroy a Turkish redoubt known as "the Pinnacle" east of the Apex and in spite of heavy fire succeeded in entering it. After remaining there for half an hour, during which time it partially demolished the defences, the party was forced to withdraw. Before the party regained our trenches half its strength had become casualties—three killed and eight wounded. As Arthur was 'fresh', it is unlikely he would have taken part in the attempt. The battalion then went into reserve at [Otago Gully](#), just north of outpost 2, and south of old outpost 3, on 20th August and remained there until the 23rd when it was ordered to garrison the inner defences. The Canterbury Battalion was relieved of some of its defences on 25th August but remained in defence of Big Table Top and Old No. 3 Post until 28th.



RHODODENDRON SPUR FROM THE APEX.
Notice the luxuriant growth of thistle in the old trench lines.

Arthur Davidson was admitted to the Military Hospital in Malta on 31st August 1915 and embarked for England on 22 September 1915 where he was admitted to hospital and “attended to strength” for two months. On 1st March 1916 he re-joined his unit in Ismailia.

Deployment of the New Zealand Division to France

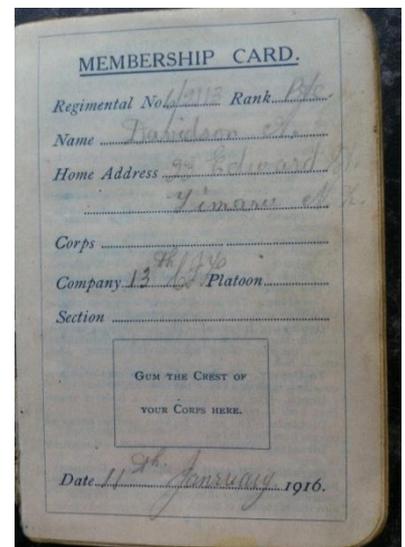
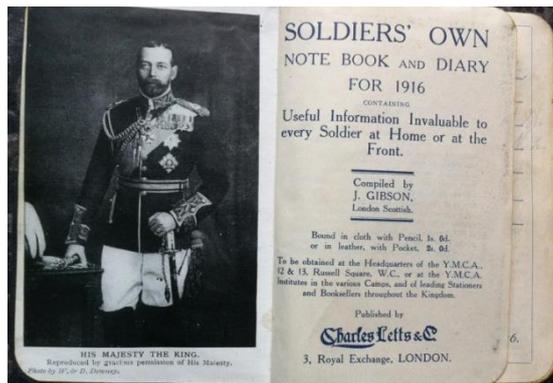
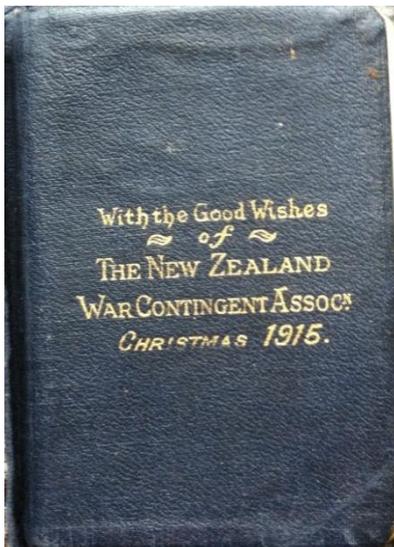
The New Zealand Division was established as a new formation in Egypt on 1st March 1916 out of the former New Zealand and Australian Division, which had fought on Gallipoli. It's units assembled in little over a month, enabling advance parties to depart from Alexandria for Marseilles on 5 April. From Marseilles they boarded trains going to Paris by Lyon & Dijon then to Calais by Amiens and Abbeville and then south east to Hazebrouck. This train journey took 57 hours, the train travelling at 20kph. By the last week of April, the whole division of three infantry brigades and supporting arms and services, had concentrated in Northern France in villages to the west of Armentieres, such as Estaires and Hazebrouck.

Arthur Davidson embarked for Marseilles France from Port Said on 6th April 1916, in the **1st Battalion Canterbury Infantry, 13th Company**. Three days later **Mark Davidson**, who had just arrived from New Zealand, embarked for France, also from Port Said. His Battalion arrived in France on 24th April 1916.



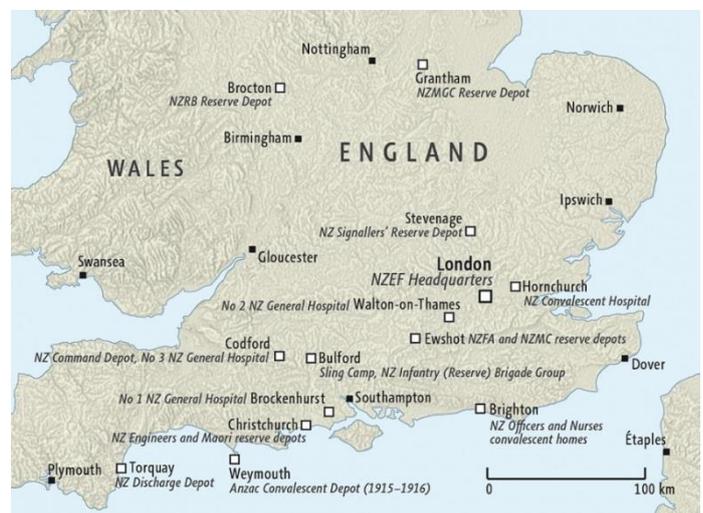
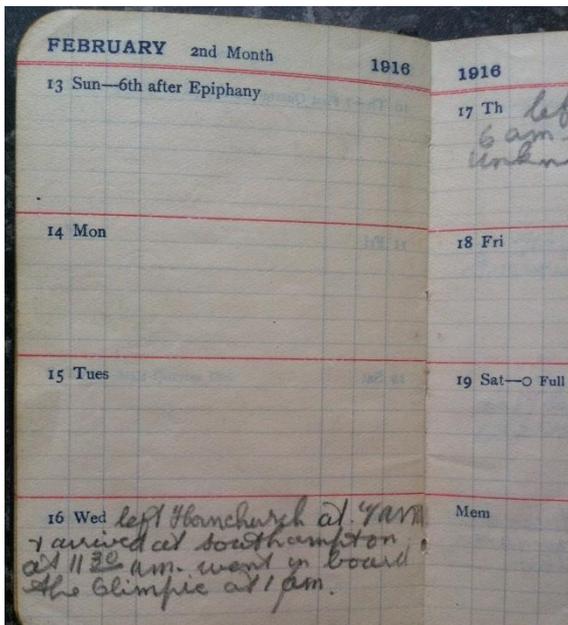
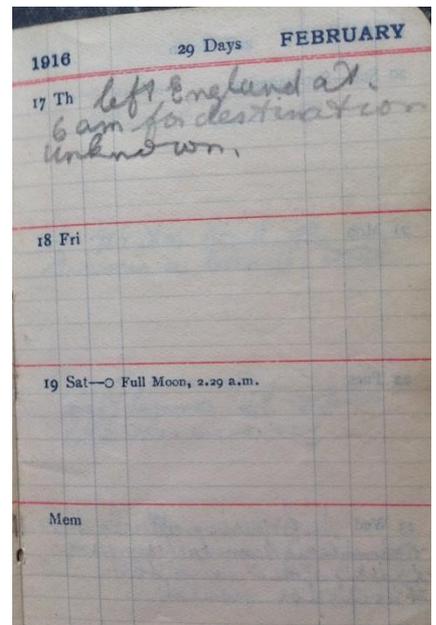
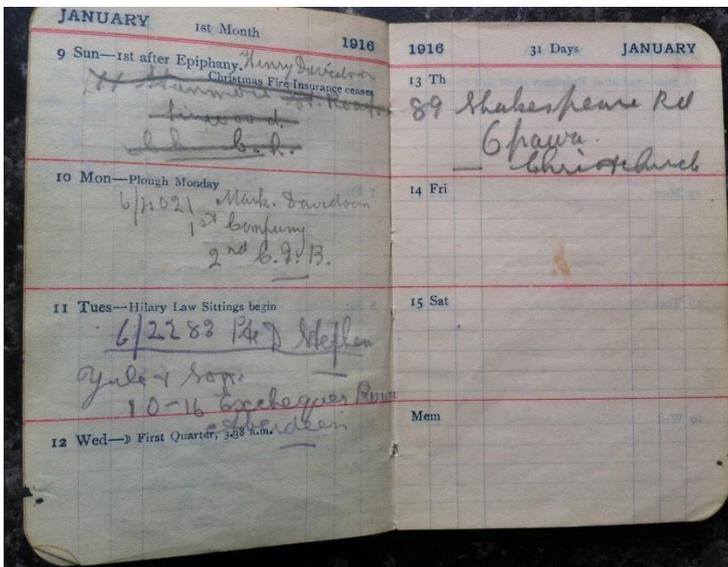
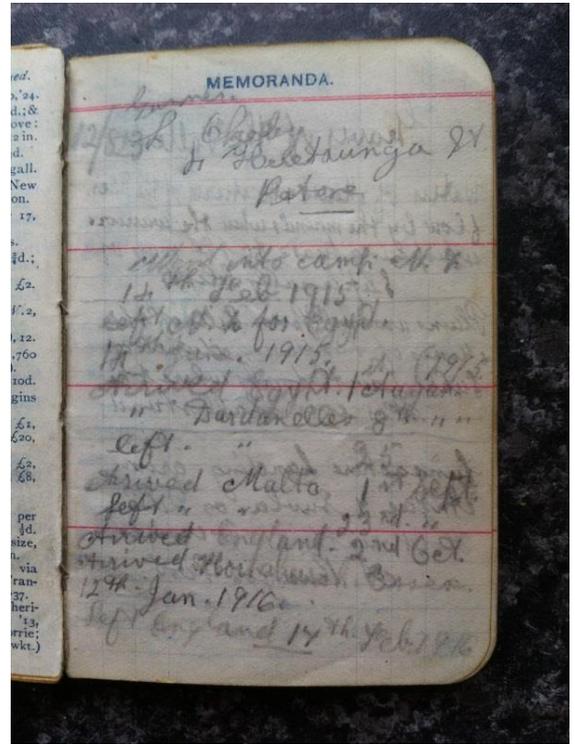
Arthur Davidson Centre

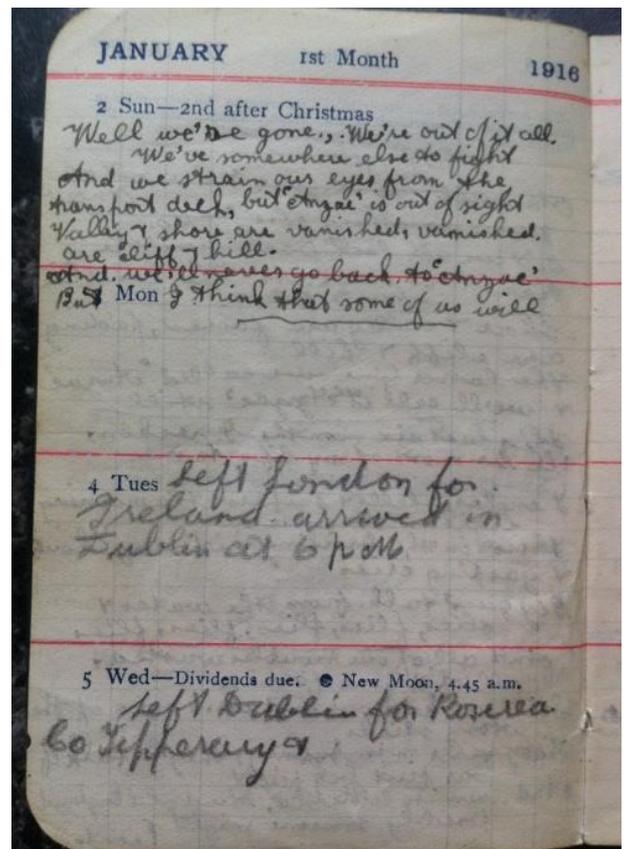
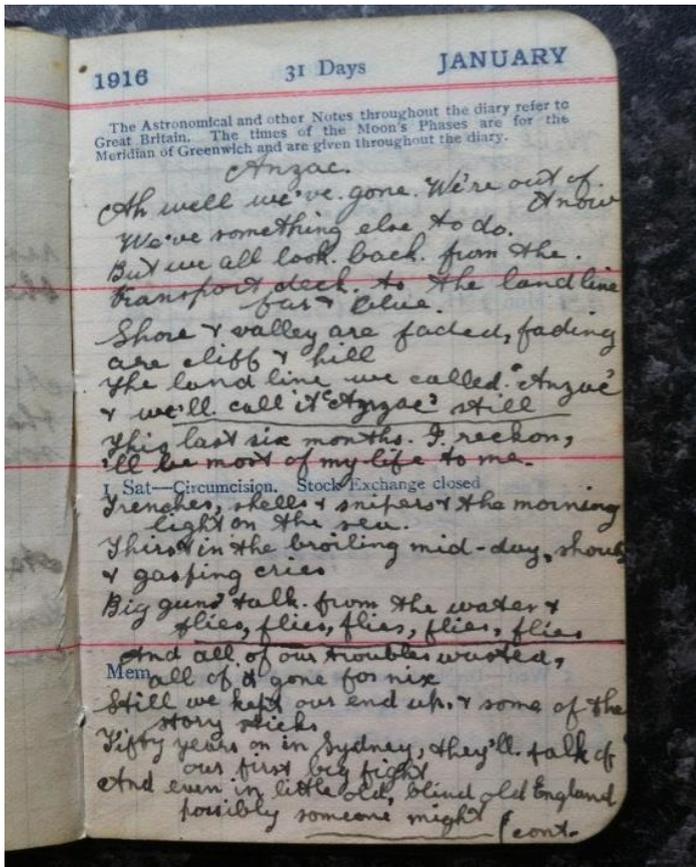
Arthur Davidson Soldier's Diary 1916



The first page of Arthur's diary recaps the previous year, 1915

Went into camp NZ 12th Feb 1915
 Left NZ for Egypt 11 June 1915
 Arrived Egypt 1st August 1915
 Arrived Dardanelles 8th August 1915
 Left Dardanelles 25th August 1915
 (Injured and in Malta Hospital)
 Left Malta 23rd September 1915
 Arrived England 2nd October 1915
 (Ireland early January 1916)
 Arrived Hornchurch Essex 12th
 January 1916
 Left England 17th February 1916

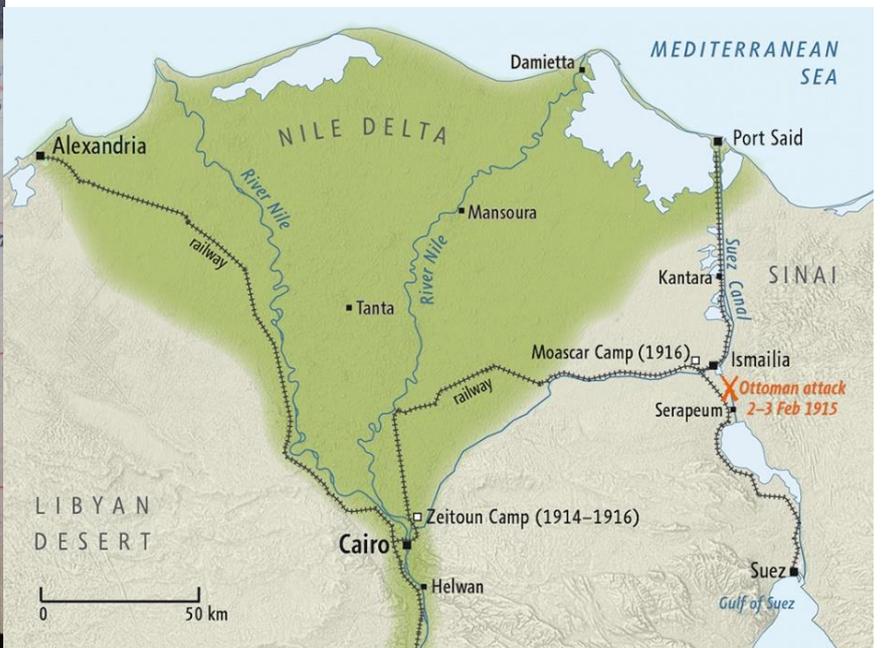
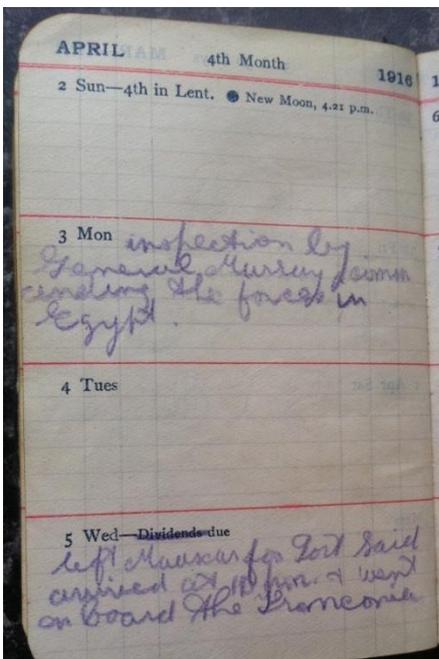
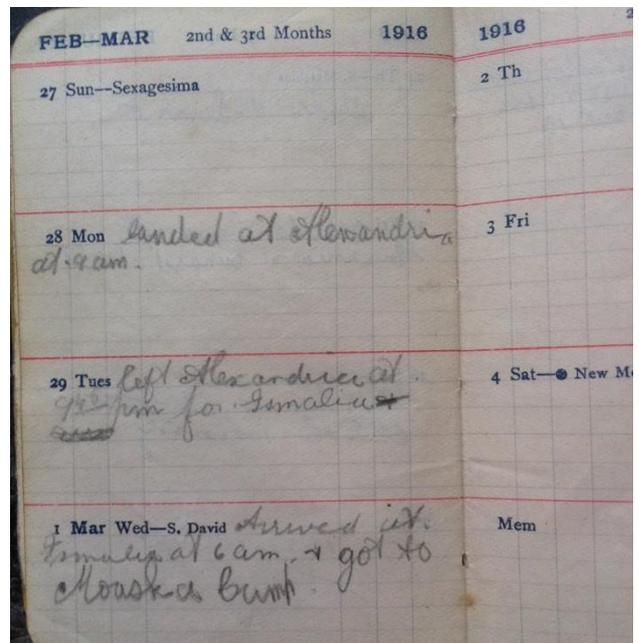
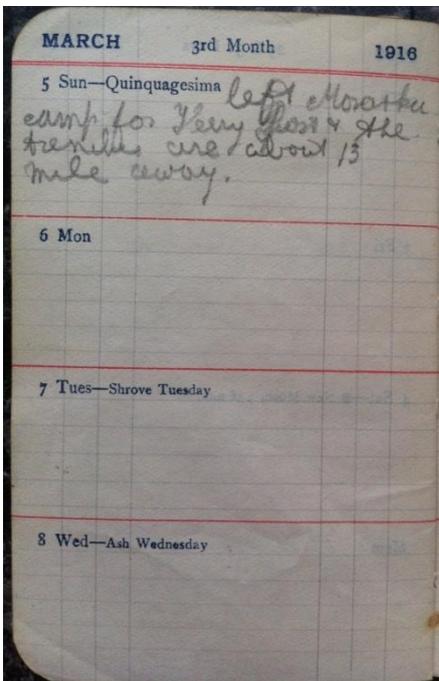
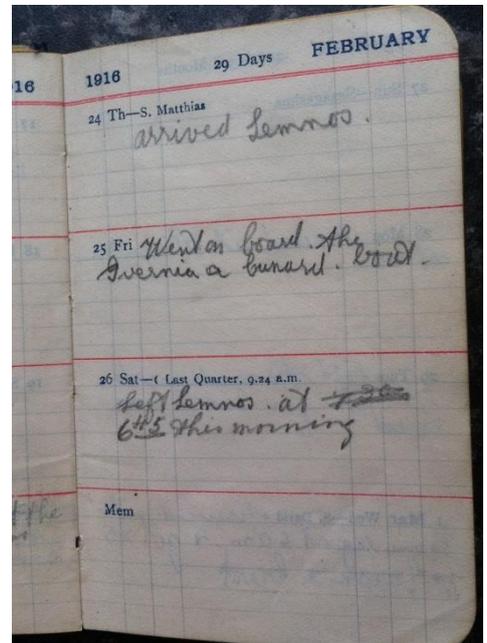
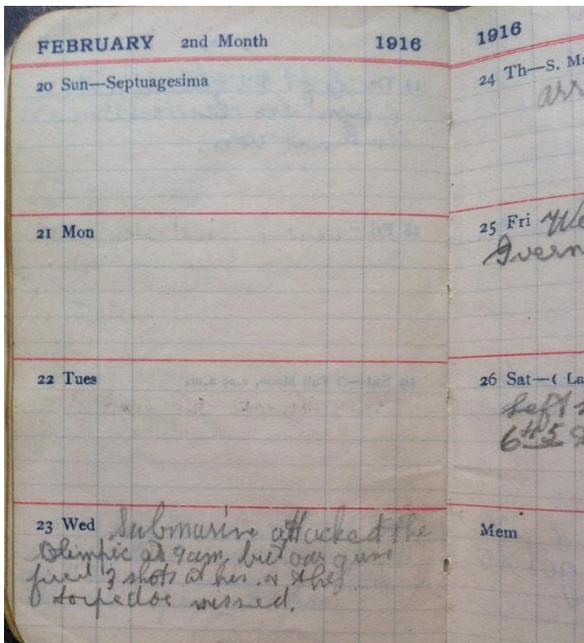


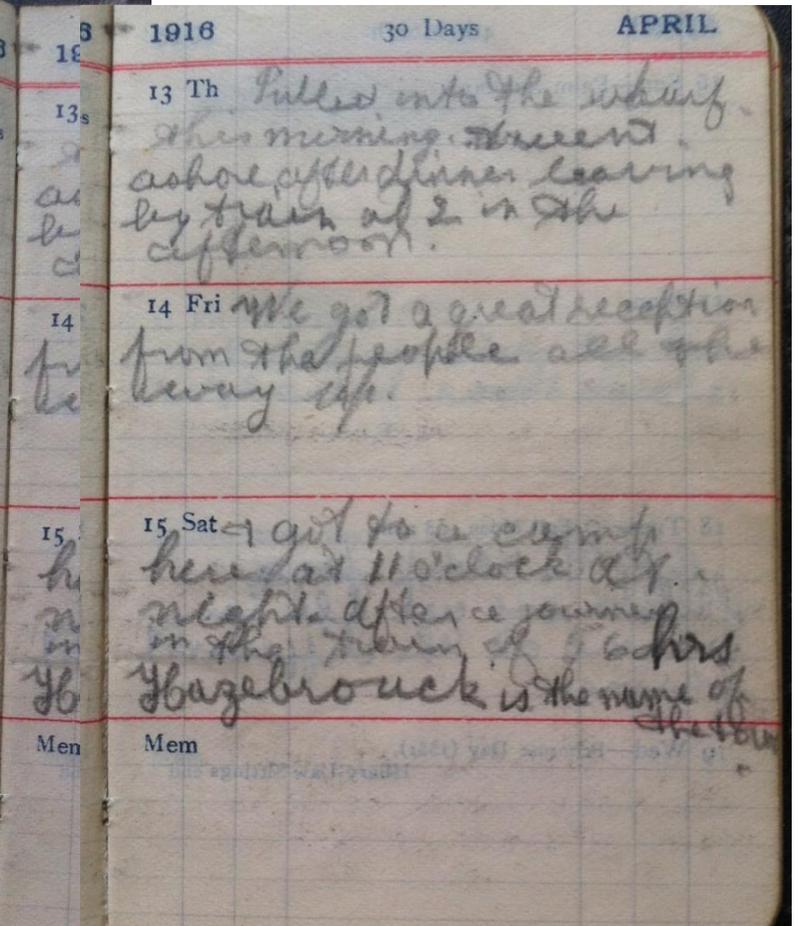
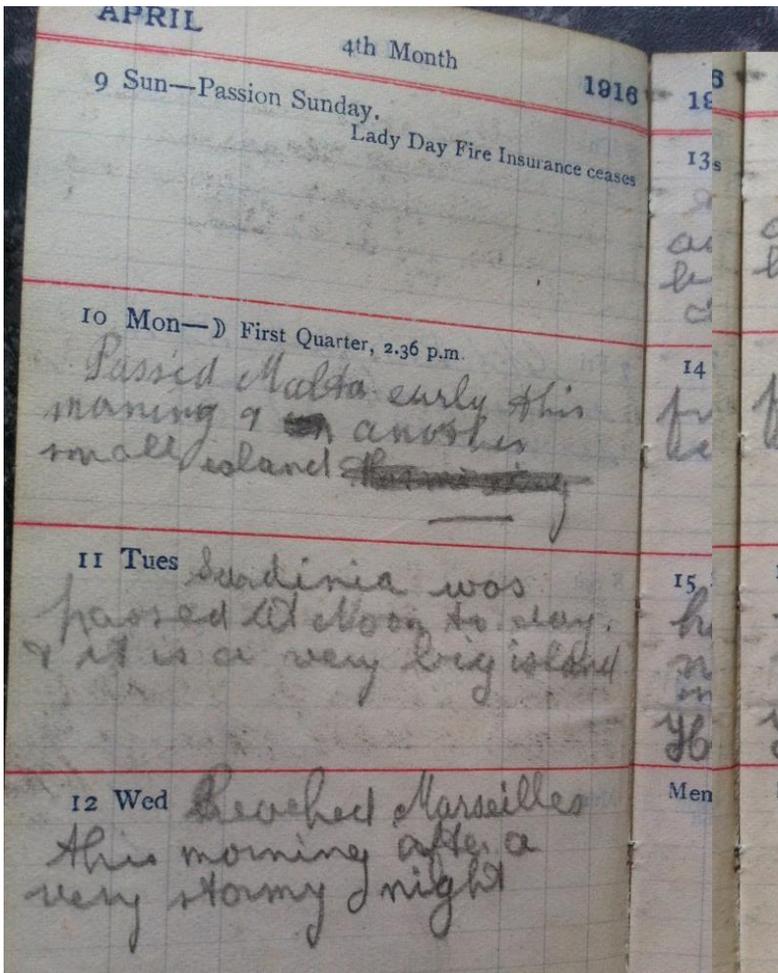
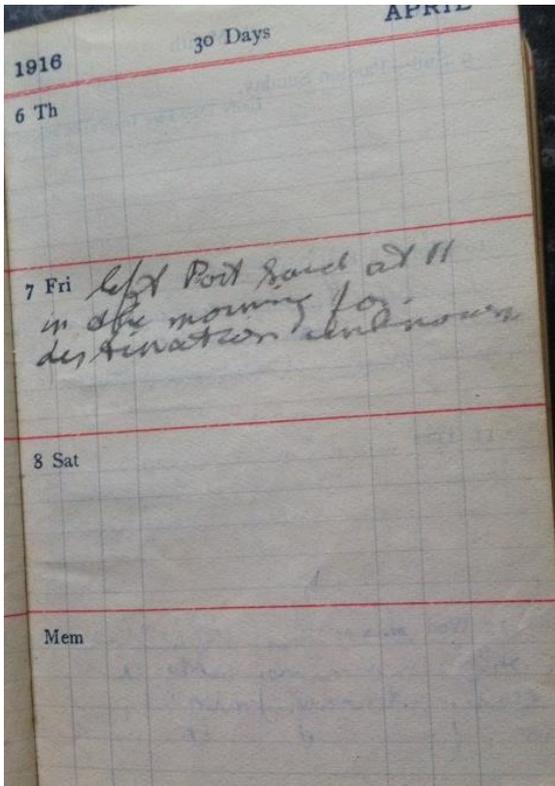


ANZAC

Ah well we've gone. We're out of it now. We've something else to do.
 But we all look back from the transport deck to the land line far and blue
 Shore & valley are faded, faded are cliff & hill
 The landline we called "Anzac" & we'll call it "Anzac" still.
 This last six months, I reckon, will be the most of my life to me
 Trenches, shells, snipers & the morning light on the sea
 Thirst in the boiling mid-day, shouts and gasping cries
 Big suns talk from the water & flies, flies, flies, flies, flies.
 And all of our troubles wasted & all of it gone for nix
 Still we kept our end up & some of the story sticks.
 Fifty years on in Sydney, they'll talk of our first big fight
 And even in little old, blind old England
 Possibly someone might feat

Well we're gone, We're out of it all, we've somewhere else to fight
 And we strain our eyes from the transport decks but "Anzac" is out of sight
 Valley & Shore are vanished, vanished are cliff & hill
 And we'll never go back to "Anzac" but I think that some of us will ...





APRIL 4th Month 1916

16 Sun—Palm Sunday

17 Mon

18 Tues—O Full Moon, 5.8 a.m.
left the camp for billets we are all in barns at the different farms.

19 Wed—Prinrose Day (1881).
 Hilary Law Sittings end

1916 30 Days APRIL

20 Th—Maundy Thursday

21 Fri—Good Friday
church service to day, instead of route march

22 Sat—Easter Eve

Mem

APRIL 4th Month 1916

23 Sun—Easter Day. S. George

24 Mon—Easter Monday Bank Holiday
 (Last Quarter, 10.38 p.m.)

25 Tues—Easter Tuesday. S. Mark
left Morbeque for Estaires.

26 Wed

1916 30 Days APRIL

27 Th

28 Fri ~~left Estaires for Ammentieres~~

29 Sat

Mem

MAY 5th Month 1916

7 Sun—2nd after Easter

8 Mon

9 Tues—Half Quarter Day
left Morbeque for Estaires at 5 km arrived 11.32 am.

10 Wed—D First Quarter, 8.47 a.m.

1916 31 Days MAY

11 Th

12 Fri *left Estaires at 6 p.m. for Ammentieres. arrived at 11.32 night.*

13 Sat

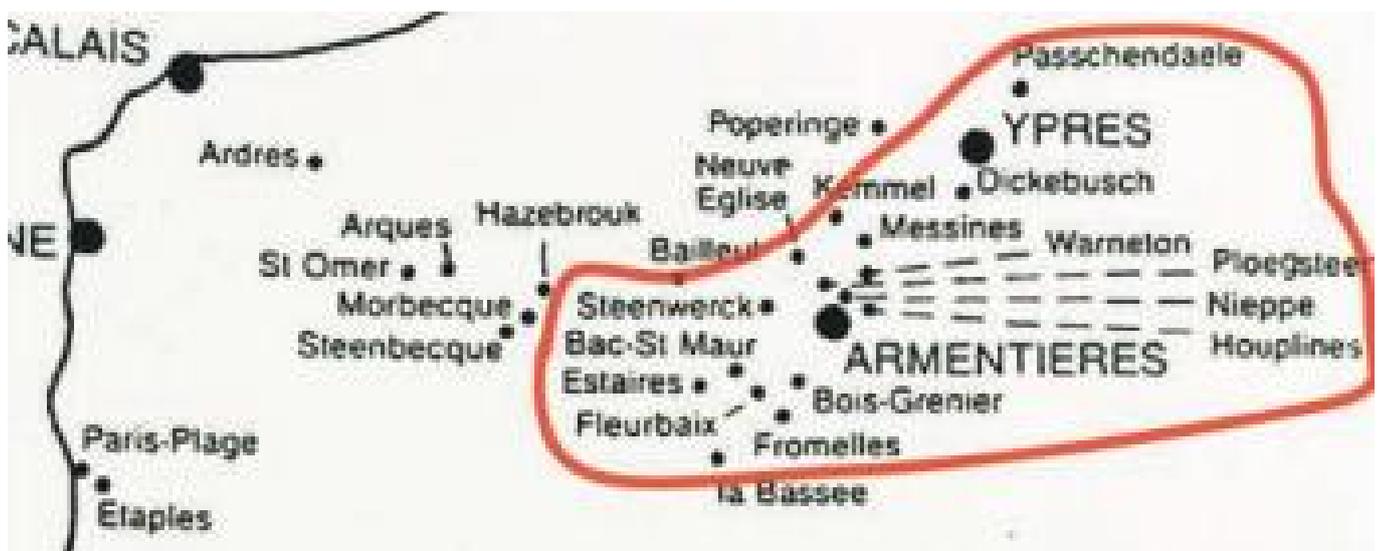
Mem

The New Zealand Division was sent to the Armentieres area, where both Canadian and Australian Divisions were defending the sector. Over the next three months the troops were deployed to dig trenches as well as 'going over the top' to strike at the Germans. As circumstances occurred companies were withdrawn into reserve for periods of rest and training.



Armentieres was dubbed the Nursery Sector and the British, Australian and Canadian forces were happy to treat the Nursery Sector as a training area. During the three months at Armentieres the NZ Division went in gung hoe and raided 11 German trenches and was the target of four. Whether because of this or not, the division incurred 2500 casualties, including 375 killed, a number much larger than the other divisions. Each brigade spent 10-14 days in the trenches, followed by a week in reserve where they were billeted in villages which set up bars and recreation. This was a time for the troops to receive and write letters.⁽³⁾

Retrained and re-organised the NZ Division received British-made 'PH Hood' gas masks for protection against chlorine and phosgene poison gases, and everyone had to practise new gas drills and attend live demonstrations at British gas warfare schools. NZ soldiers began wearing the new rounded 'Brodie' pattern steel helmet and, unlike at Gallipoli, were well supplied with grenades – Mills Bombs.



France
28th July

Dear Henry

got your letter today which came as a surprise. Though you write a good letter. Well I got a big mail from the old Druit now from Ireland & two or three places in Scotland you know. Well we had a good time there as you say, the New Zealanders & I & I am in hope of getting there again before I come back here? Well I had a close call about a fortnight ago, a bullet passing through the neck of my overcoat & tunic into my neck. It just went in about half an inch & then dropped down my back so am keeping it. Well there is plenty souvenirs about here (noe/head?) of a shell & shell cases. We have had some hot times here since we came out & sorry to say we have lost a few good fellows but that is to be expected. Well I saw Mark about 3 months ago & we had a lot to talk about.

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He giving me all the home news.
Well he had been put into the 2nd Brigade
so I can't see him unless we go back
for a spell. I wrote to him over a week
ago & I hope he is all right but of course
news would go home first.
Well there is a lot of different sights to
be seen here on a day for instance
They are flying over the enemy lines
& shells bursting all around them
& machine guns going but they are
very seldom hit.
Things have been very quiet on our part
this past week but they are very busy
along the line for we can just hear the rumble
of the guns.
We have a nice selection of rats here
big & small. The trenches are overrun
with them but we get a few
with the rifle. There is some of
them as big as cats & I got one
trying on my great coat one day
which I left in my dugout.
There is a lot of cats here but
they don't touch them much.
Well I had a letter from Cissy Morris
last week & she had got your photo

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Well he had been put into the 2nd Brigade so I can't see him unless we go back for a spell. I wrote to him over a week ago & I hope he is all right but of course news would go home first.

Well there is a lot of different sights to be seen here. Our airmen for instance. They are flying over the enemy lines & shells bursting all around them & machine guns going but they are very seldom hit.

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of them as big as cats & I got one trying on my great coat one day which I left in my dugout. There is a lot of cats here but they don't touch them much.

Well I had a letter from Cissy Morris (Mother's sister living in Roscrea Ireland) last week & she had got your photo

& she was admiring your curly hair.

Aunt Nellie has a lot to say about you every time she writes.

Well we get a bit of fruit in the trenches but it is made of iron pineapples. They are just the size of that fruit with the propeller at the back fired from the trench mortars. We get plenty of variety here but they don't do a lot of damage considering the amount they put over at Aimes.

Well that was very good of you to send that ?? but I will not forget when I get back.

I am sorry to hear about father & he ought to be kicked. in no way Mother was quite right to get you out of the army for you are too young & it needs a man on this job. ⁽⁴⁾

You must not join until you are 20 in any case. & it will surely be over by that time.

I am glad you are liking your new job & you will be all right in a few years time when you get on an engine.

Well I might give you another letter in about 3 weeks time.

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 I suppose you will be getting
 acquaint with some nice girls in
 Christchurch & you might be married
 before I get back.
 I hope not for I will get a fling there
 Well no more news
 I remain
 Yours
 Arthur
 P. Smith

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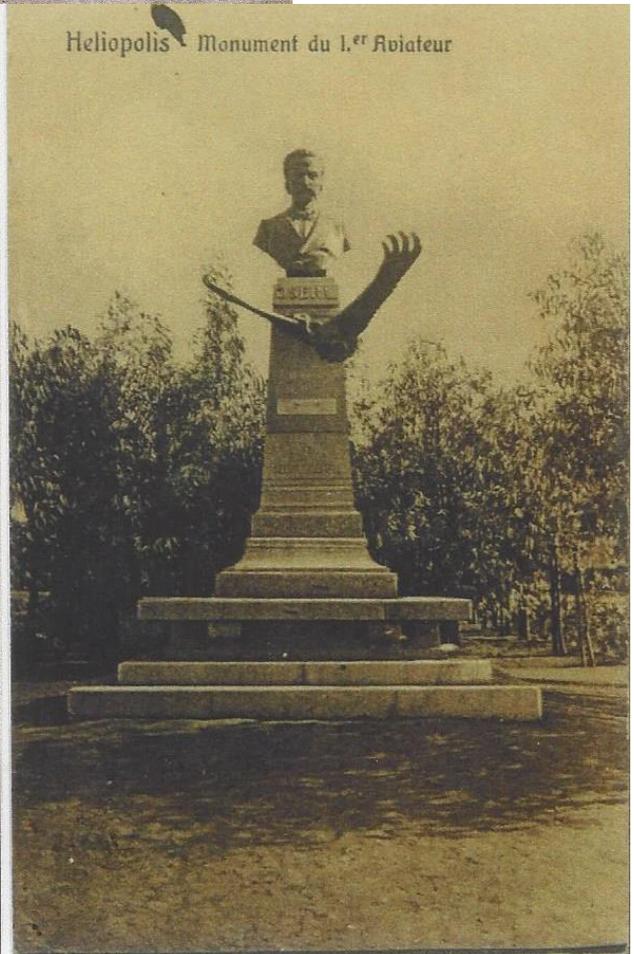
I remain

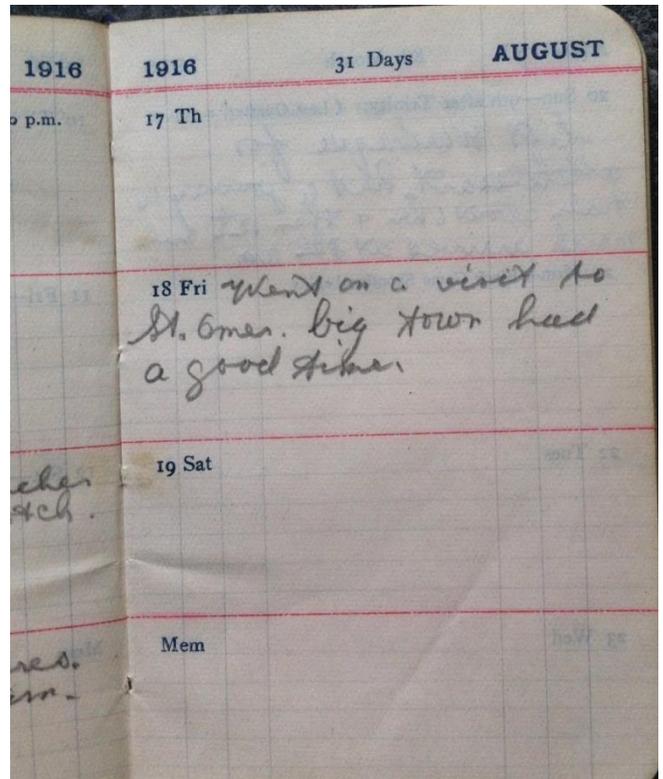
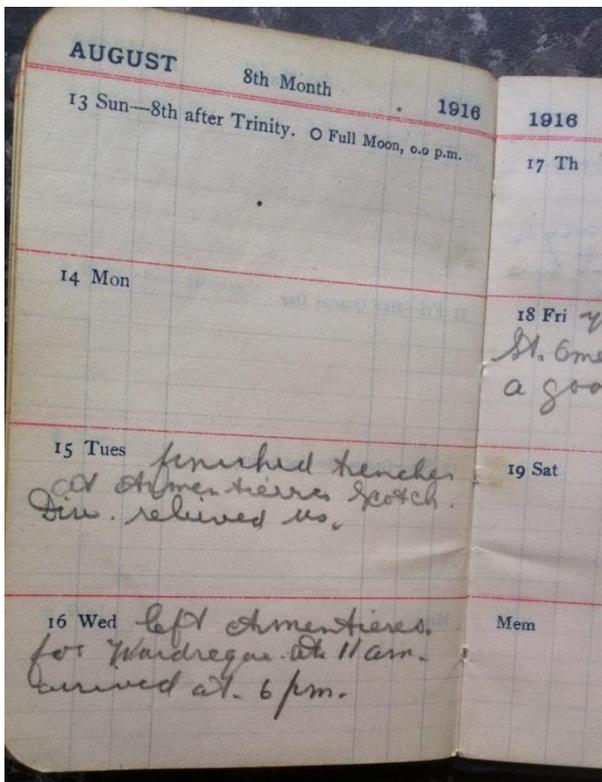
From

Arthur

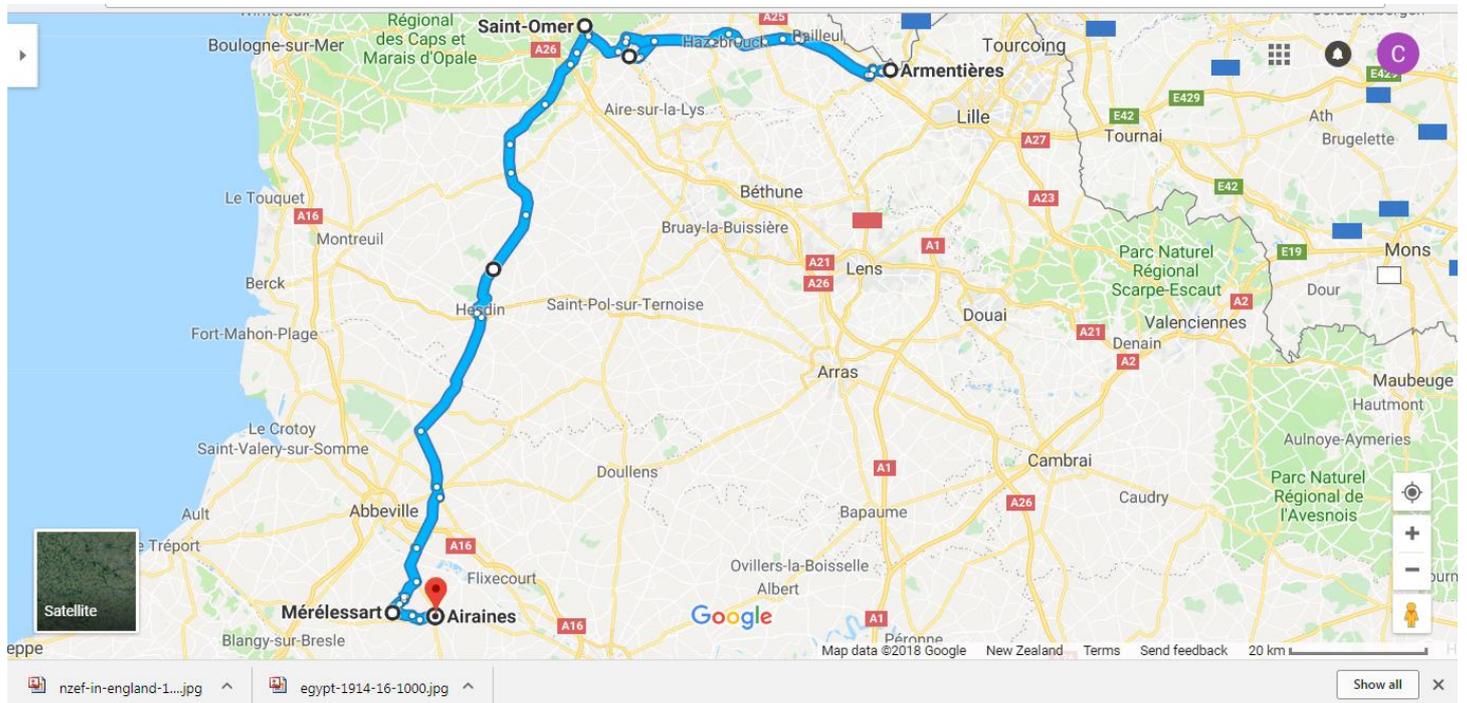
Dear Mother
 I am quite well
 & happy & hope to be
 with you again soon
 I have got no letter
 from you lately the
 last one was dated 16th
 I will say no
 to but wish you
 all the good things
 & to cheer up
 well everybody I was
 asking for them
 Arthur
 J. Smith

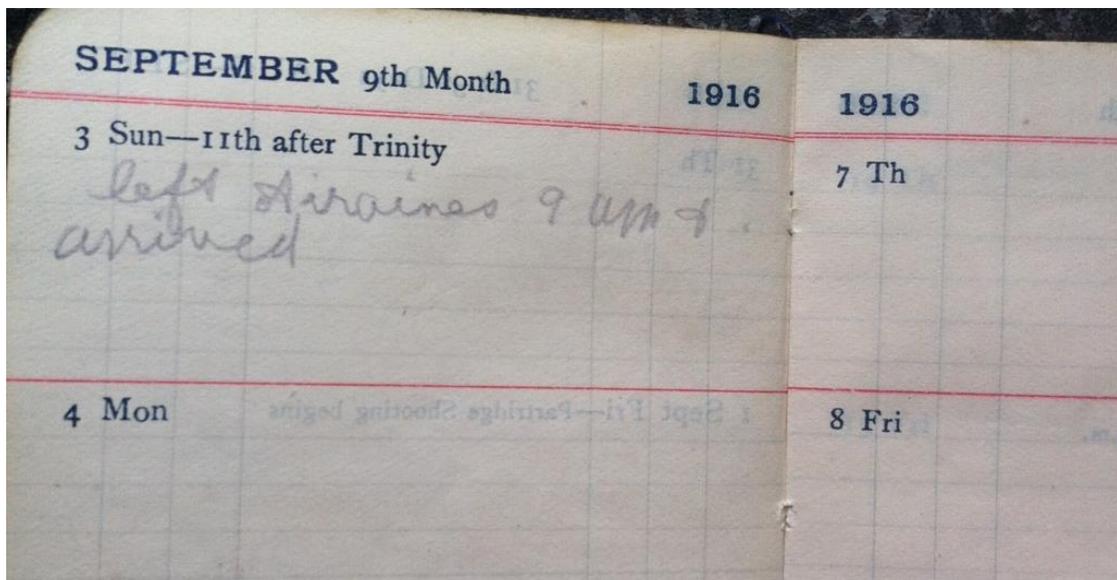
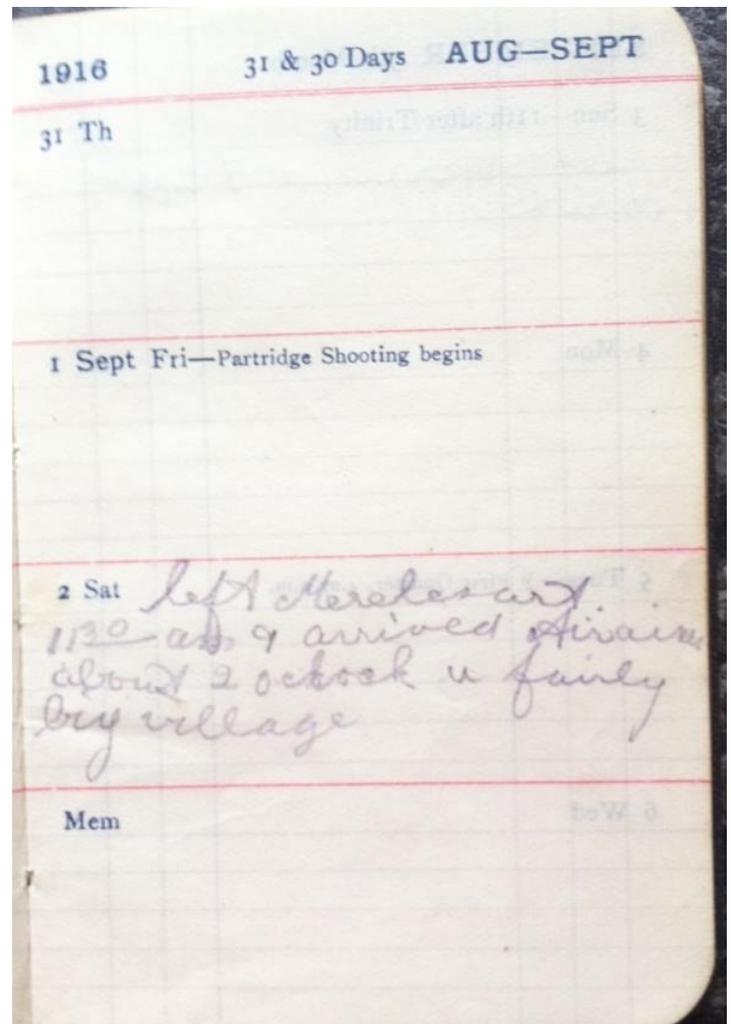
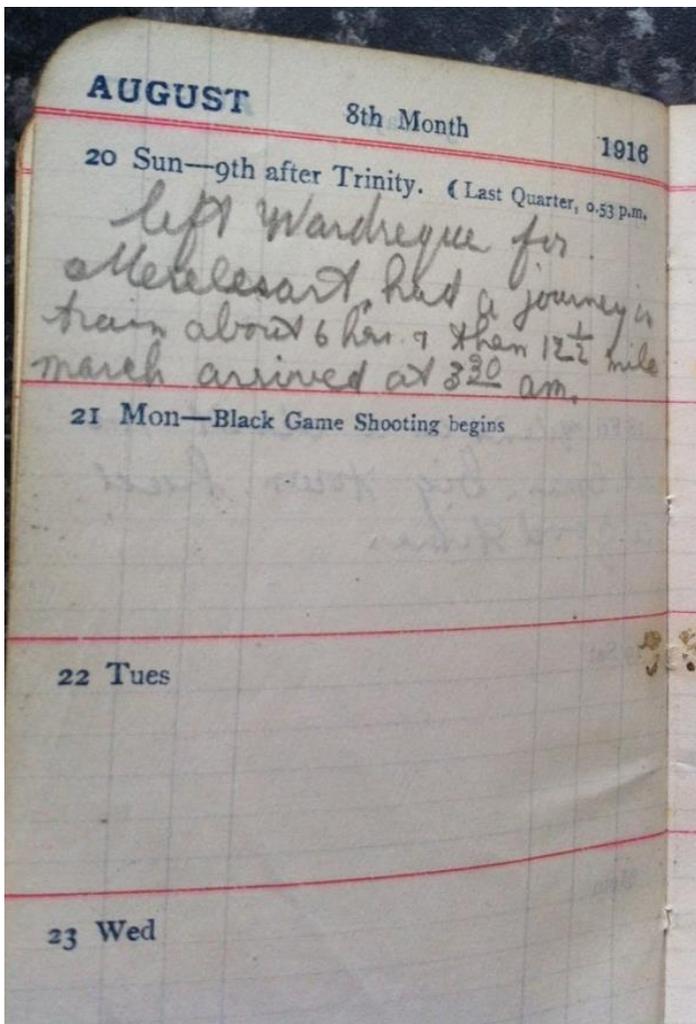
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On 1st July 1916 in the Somme, Britain suffered 57470 casualties, of whom 19,240 were killed. This was Britain's worse day of the War. The Battle of the Somme 1916 had started and the entire NZ division was ordered to withdraw from Armentières. **Arthur Davidson** has recorded the journey to the lower Somme in his diary. By 22 August 1916 the NZ division was concentrated in the Abbeville training area on the lower Somme.





This is the last entry in the Diary.

Arthur Davidson

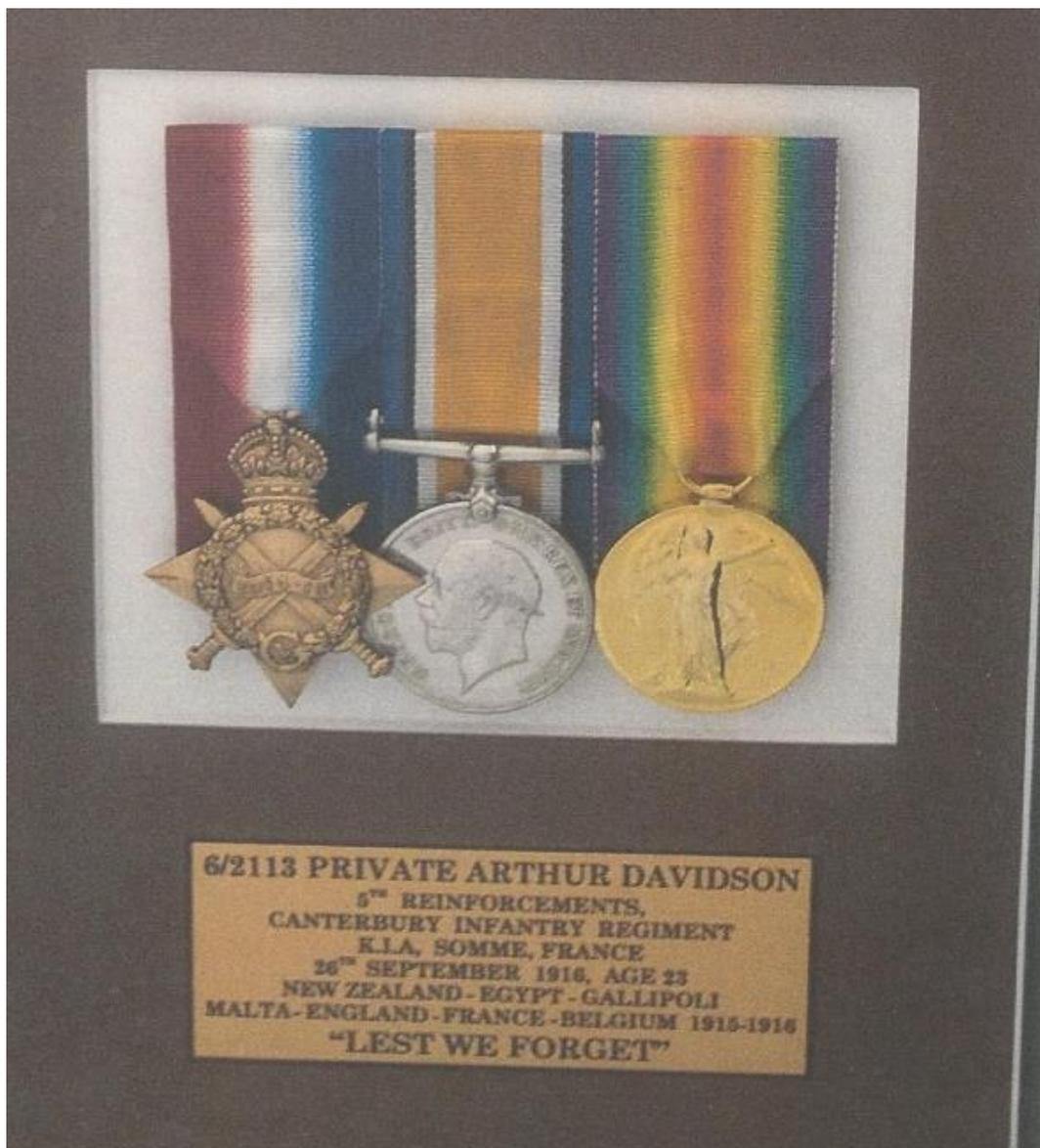
Killed in Action 26th September 1916

The Somme September 1916

On 2 September 1916 New Zealand Division started its march up the Somme Valley. They paused for training days and on 8th September the New Zealand infantry was clustered in the Albert area, The following day they took the road through Meaulte and Becordel to Fricourt. On 11 September 1916 the NZ Division was poised for the **First Battle of the Somme**.

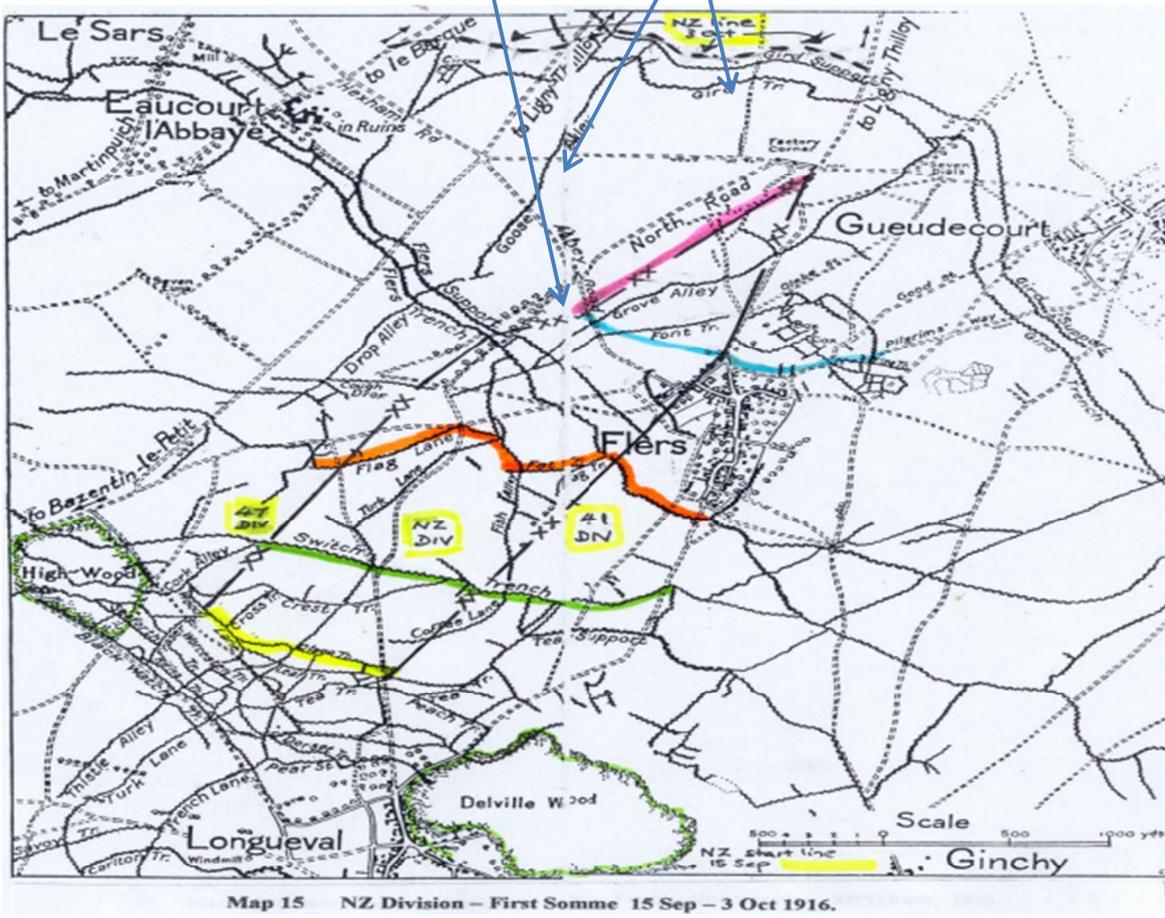


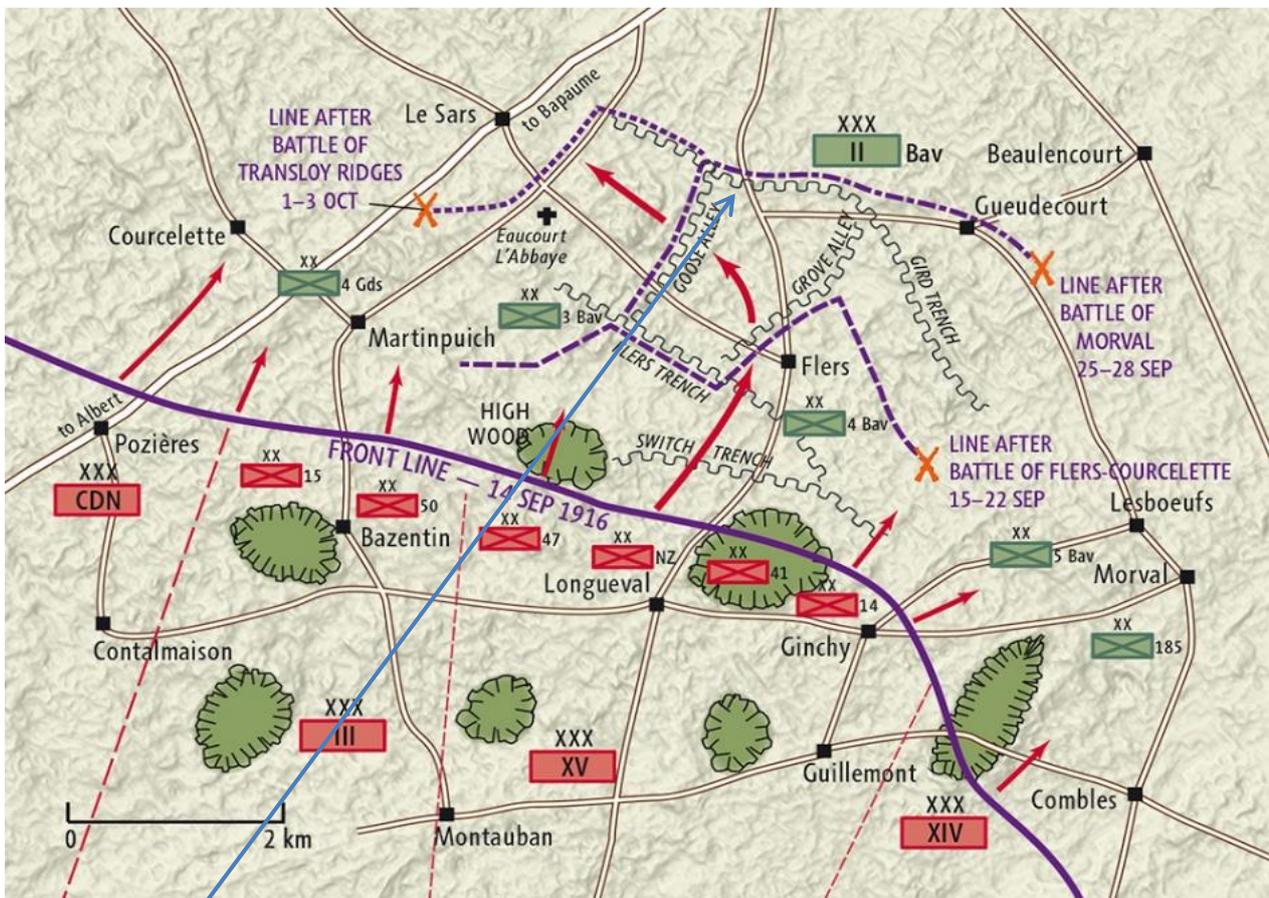
History books have recorded the **Three Battles of the Somme, September 1916-October 1916** in great detail. What I want to do is try and paint a picture of the lead up and the day of Tuesday 26th September 1916 and the location where I think **Arthur Davidson** was killed.



The Second Battle of the Somme was called the **Battle of Morval 25-28 September 1916**. The objective for NZ was to secure the section between Grove Alley and Goose Alley and capture Gird Trench. The objective for 1st Canterbury was to secure Factory Corner. Factory Corner is a T intersection of North Road to the road which runs from Eaucourt-L'Abbye to Gueudecourt, a little west of the intersection of the road from Flers to Ligny-Thilloy. It had been named because of a sugar factory there which was damaged by the Germans upon occupation in 1915. Gird Trench was beyond the road and was fortified by a thick hedge of barbed wire, with a support trench line 150 yards in its rear.

The 25th September was beautifully fine, which meant visibility and observation was good. Early in the day the enemy had bombarded our trenches for 2 hours, causing several casualties. The NZ Infantry assembled at an area south of Abbey Road and Grove Trench. At 12:35pm, following the steady creeping artillery barrage, the NZ Infantry left the Fleur trenches and 1st Canterbury advanced along Abbey Road to move up the North Road Valley. 1st Otago on their left continued towards Goose Alley and meeting little resistance, veered right at Goose Alley and dug in alongside Abbey Road. The Germans, seeing the unbroken lines coming at speed with fixed bayonets filed north east towards Gird Trench, along Goose Alley. As 1st **Canterbury** advanced on Factory Corner about 60 the enemy attempted to retire towards the Goose Alley ridge but were practically exterminated by our machine guns. There was some resistance in an intermediate trench connected with the strong point but for the most part the enemy ran. Prisoners were captured in the German Headquarters at Factory Corner. Their Colonel was wounded and whilst being attended to in the advanced dressing station, was killed by one of his countrymen's shells. Factory Corner had been an artillery headquarters and one of the buildings also had been used as an Engineer's dump, so the quality of useful war material captured by 1st **Canterbury** was considerable. Under cover of an advanced line of skirmishes, a series of posts was then dug in by 1st **Canterbury** and 1st Auckland on the high ground from in front of the German cemetery at Factory Corner to the point where Goose Alley crossed Abbey Road. The assault on 25th September 1916 was recorded as successful.





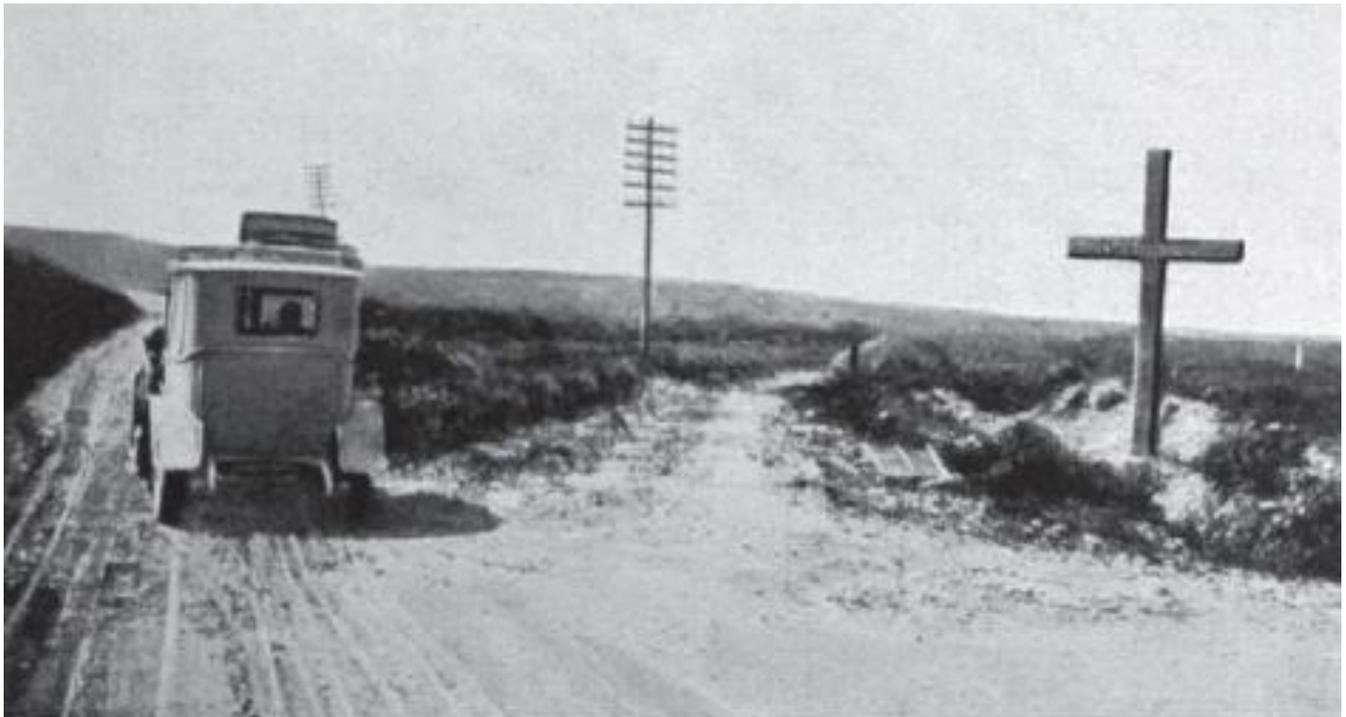
A certain amount of bombing exchanges took place between the sentries but on the whole the night 25/26th passed quietly. **Arthur Davidson** would have been entrenched between Factory Corner and the Gird Trench, digging and widening shell holes into trenches and covering details going out and cutting wire in front of Gird Trench. Tuesday 26th September 1916 was another fine day, visibility was good – an advantage for both sides. No movement of importance took place on the Divisional front on this day, the 1st and 2nd Brigades were busily engaged in cutting wire in front of Gird Trench in preparation for the advance again on the 27th.

The Germans sent up 18 observation balloons into the sky, but an aeroplane attack destroyed one and the rest were lowered. There was considerable movement from the north-east of Gueudecourt back to the ridge running to Ligny Thillooy and on those excellent targets the 3rd Brigade and other batteries poured effective fire. It was tantalising to the field artillery to watch traffic on the Bapaume-Peronne Road (North of Ligny Thillooy) out of reach. In the afternoon a German battery was seen retiring at full gallop towards Ligny Thillooy. After darkness fell, the flashes of another battery between the Butte de Warlincourt and Le Sars were observed. It was located and silenced.

Shortly after midday, heavy shelling in the rear of our front line and on Flers Village and the Flers system seemed to indicate an enemy attack and an attempt to bar the advance of our supporters. A brigade of German artillery was also seen advancing from Ligny Thillooy and Le Barque in the direction of Factory Corner and to the right. As they took cover for assembly in the corn and long grass, the heavy artillery, including Howitzers of the 55th Division on our right searched the area and when the Germans advanced into the open the guns broke into salvos of destruction. The attack withered away and the fleeing remnants were annihilated by the 3rd and 4th Artillery.

During the night 26/27th patrols inspected the Gird entanglements of barbed wire, which extended on iron standards in 4 rows. Opposite the right of 1st **Canterbury** they were found to be considerable damaged, but 1st Auckland reported the wire in front of their objective to be intact.

It is recorded that **Arthur Davidson** was killed on 26th September 1916 but not the exact location nor which battle. If he was wounded days earlier and actually died on 26th September, then his body would have been recovered and buried. But his body was never identified. He most likely took a direct hit by a mortar or shell during the attacks near Factory Corner. He is entombed and remembered in the memorial at Caterpillar Valley Cemetery.



Factory Corner 1919, and New Zealand Memorial Cross.

Courtesy of the Michelin Guide – Somme 1919

In 1919, a temporary Cross was to be seen at this corner, in memory of the New Zealanders killed in the vicinity. This memorial would have been taken down when the permanent Memorial to the Missing was put in place at Caterpillar Valley Cemetery.





Factory Corner at the D197/D74 intersection, looking south.
Courtesy of The Bob Anderson Collection



FACTORY CORNER

1. Looking towards Eaucourt L'Abbaye and Le Sars, Goose Alley on the left
2. Looking back at Factory Corner with Goose Alley on the right
3. Looking towards Factory Corner
4. Flers is on the skyline on the far right.

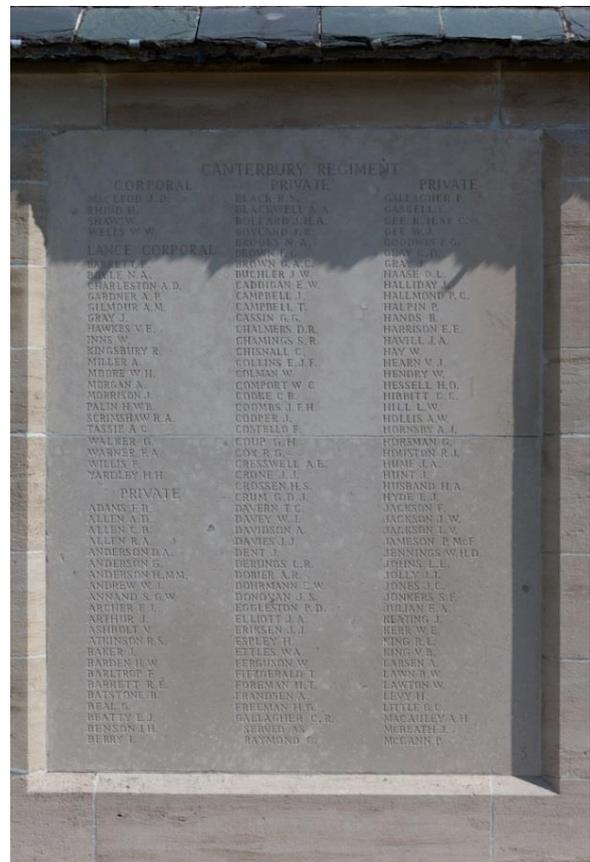
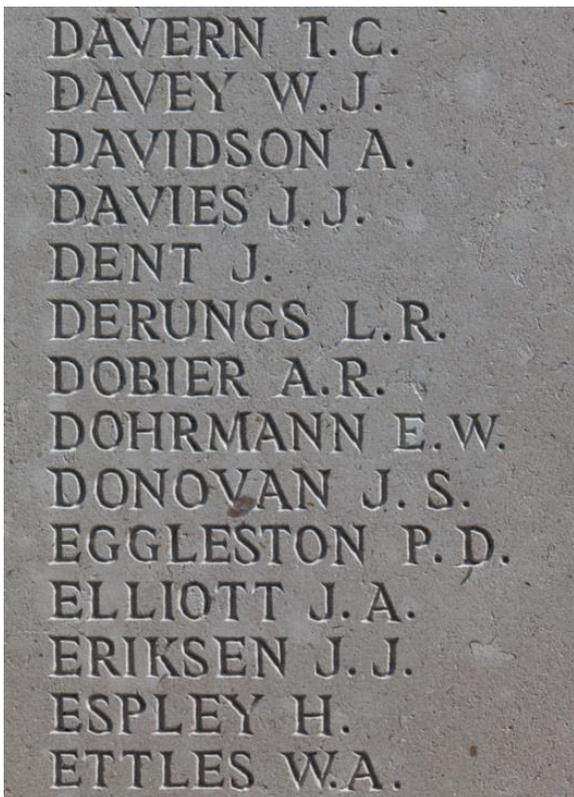
Last Three photos taken July 2018



CATERPILLAR VALLEY CEMETERY is in Longueville, about 5kilometres south of Factory Corner. It contains 5,569 Commonwealth burials, of which 125 are known New Zealand soldiers whose bodies were identified. The memorial bears the names of a further 1,205 New Zealand soldiers whose bodies were never found or identified after the battles of 1916.

Here are recorded the names of Officers and Men of New Zealand who fell in the Battles of the Somme, September and October 1916 and whose graves are known only to God

In 2004 the remains of an unidentified New Zealand soldier were exhumed from Caterpillar Valley Cemetery and transported back to New Zealand by a Guard of Honour. On Armistice Day 11 November 2004, New Zealand's Unknown Warrior, after lying in state in Parliament Building and a Memorial Service in Wellington Cathedral was borne through the streets of the capital amidst 100,000 spectators. He was then re-interred in the National War Memorial. Wildly seen on television, it was arguably the most impressive single piece of military ceremonial in the country's history. There is a 1,205 chance this soldier is **Arthur Davidson** as he was one of New Zealand soldiers whose bodies were never found or identified.





THE FINAL JOURNEY

Oil on Canvas (2005)

I find this painting the most moving. It depicts the casket being slow marched through the crowded streets of Wellington, as people stopped whatever they were doing to watch the procession move slowly toward the National War Memorial and final resting place for the Unknown Warrior. I remember you could hear a pin drop that day as people watched and thought about our warrior in the otherwise noisy streets. I walked along and took some photos of some veterans, some of which were very old. Within the face of one old soldier I could see so many conflicting emotions that describe every thing about that day, and within his eyes briefly as he watched the casket go past I could see the terrible cost of war. Like his POW medal he wore that day, the tragedy of war will remain with him for the rest of his life. I did my best to capture this amazing man on canvas and regret the fact greatly I was not able to get his name.

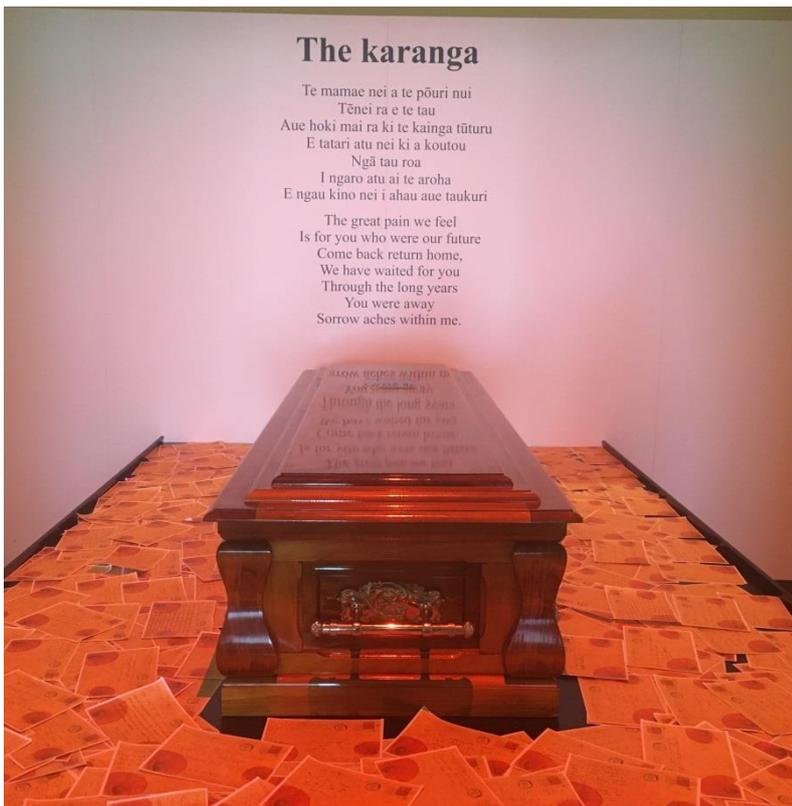
Explanation by Matt Gaudie (Artist)



The karanga

Te mamac nei a te pōuri nui
Tēnei ra e te tau
Aue hoki mai ra ki te kainga tūturu
E tatari atu nei ki a koutou
Ngā tau roa
I ngaro atu ai te aroha
E ngau kino nei i ahau aue taukuri

The great pain we feel
Is for you who were our future
Come back return home,
We have waited for you
Through the long years
You were away
Sorrow aches within me.



The karanga

Te mamac nei a te pōuri nui
Tēnei ra e te tau
Aue hoki mai ra ki te kainga tūturu
E tatari atu nei ki a koutou
Ngā tau roa
I ngaro atu ai te aroha
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The great pain we feel
Is for you who were our future
Come back return home,
We have waited for you
Through the long years
You were away
Sorrow aches within me.

Graves of the Fallen

Waters of Meuse & the stream of the Ypres,
flow by the mounds where the warriors
whispering peace to the souls of
Supernally blest.

Plains around Ypres, hills of the
Mines of La Bassee, dunes on
sacred, with tombs where the
For ever shall stand

Lancashire landing grim
Anzac & Suvla, or Quinns
Hold 'neath their crosses.
A Paragon Lost.

rest.
the heroes.

Argonne.
the sand,
souls of the mighty

Achi Baba.

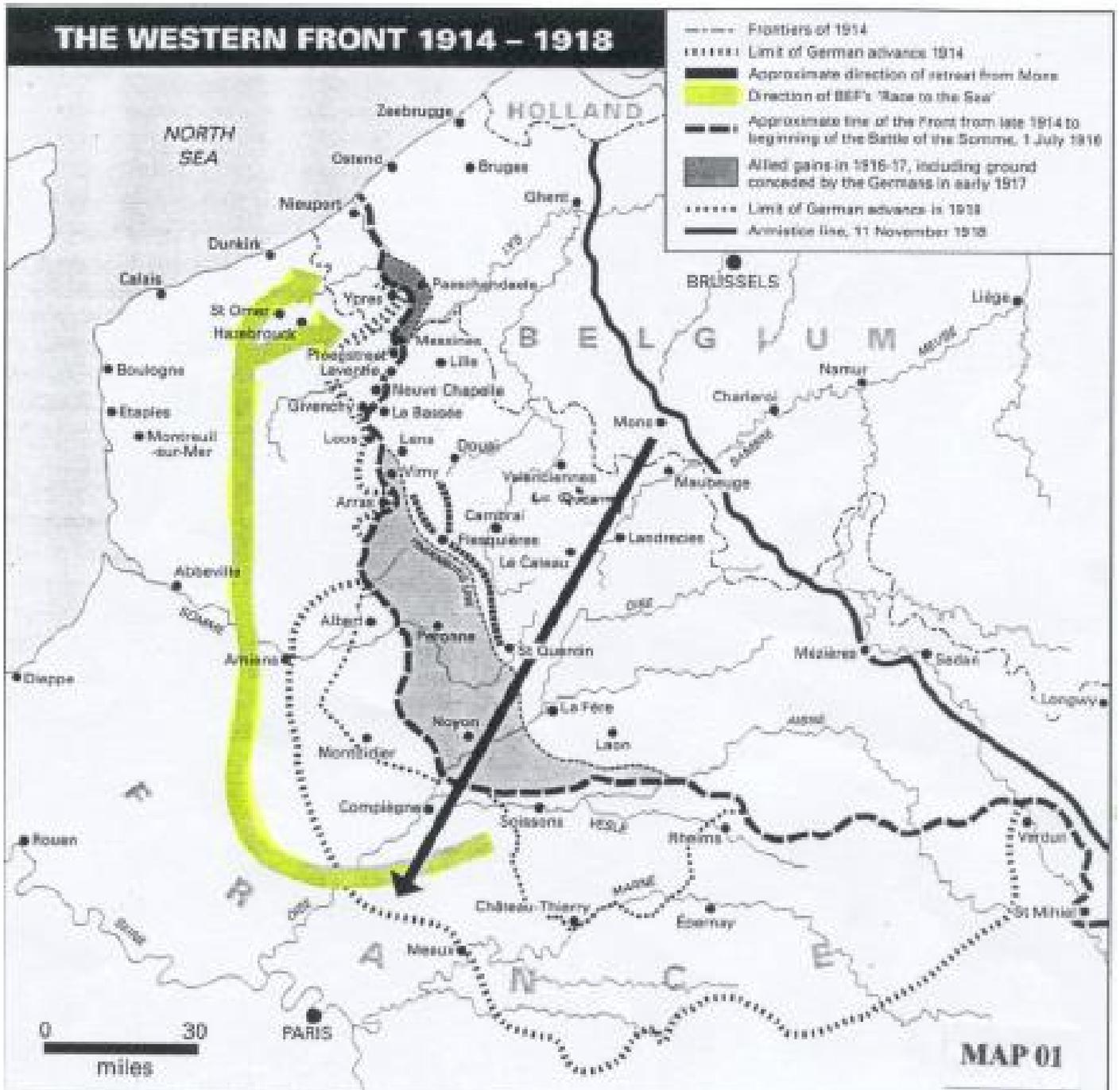
lonely Post.
crude yet resplendent.

Graves of the Fallen

Waters of the Meuse & the stream of the Ypres
Flow by the mounds where the warriors sent
Whispering peace to the souls of the heroes
Supernally blest. (? Supernaturally Blessed)

Plains around Ypres, hills of the Argonne
Mines of La Bassee, dunes on the sand
Fuered (? Strewn) with tombs where the souls of the mighty
Forever shall stand

Lancashire landing grim - Achi Baba
Anzac & Suvla or Quinns - lonely Post
Hold 'neath their crosses, (?) crude yet resplendent
A Paragon Lost



The tragedy of it all (WW1) is summed up in this map. For the British Empire forces involved, it started near the town of Mons in Belgium in August 1914 – where it also finished in November 1918. The first and last British casualties – of 22 August 1914 and 11 November 1918 respectively – lie a few paces apart there, in the same St Symphorian Military Cemetery.

*"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."*

ROLL OF HONOUR

ARBROATH AND DISTRICT

1914 : 1919



SECOND EDITION.

PTE. ARTHUR DAVIDSON, N.Z.

PRIVATE ARTHUR DAVIDSON, New Zealand Contingent, was a native of Frioekheim, and was, before going to New Zealand, employed at the Frioekheim Bleachfield. When the call to arms came he and his younger brother, Mark, gave a ready response. He was killed in action in France in October 1916.

f 78

PTE. MARK DAVIDSON, N.Z.

PRIVATE MARK DAVIDSON, New Zealand Division, who belonged to Frioekheim, was killed in action in France on the 6th of November 1918. He and his brother, Arthur, had both left Frioekheim for New Zealand, and they were amongst the first to join up when war was declared. They both made the supreme sacrifice.

f 78

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY T. BUNCLE & CO.,
MARKET PLACE, ARBROATH.

DAVIDSON.—In sad and loving memory of our dearly beloved son and brother, Private Arthur Davidson, who was killed in the Battle of the Somme, on September 26, 1916; aged 23 years.
His warfare o'er, his battles fought,
His victory won though dearly bought,
His fresh young life we could not save,
He slumbers now in a soldier's grave.
—Inserted by his loving father, mother, brothers and sisters, 23 Edward Street, Timaru.

DAVIDSON. In loving memory of my brother, Arthur, killed in action in France, September 26, 1916.
For King and Country.
—Inserted by his brother Ned.

ROLL OF HONOUR.

Timaru Herald, Volume XCVIII, Issue 170320, 8 October 1920.

About this newspaper View computer-generated text

ROLL OF HONOUR.

DAVIDSON.—In loving memory of Lance-Corporal Mark Davidson, killed in action at Lesdain, France, October 8th, 1918. Also Private Arthur Davidson, killed in action at the Battle of the Somme, September 26th, 1916.
They sleep beside their comrades,
In hallowed graves unknown,
But their names are writ in letters of gold
In the hearts they left at home.
—Inserted by their father and mother, brothers and sisters.

Timaru Herald, 13th October 1916

DAVIDSON:— In sad and loving memory of our dearly beloved son and brother, Private Arthur Davidson, who was killed in the battle of the Somme, on September 26, 1916, aged 23 years

His warfare o'er, his battles fought,
His victory won, though dearly bought,
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Timaru Herald 8th October 1920

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DAVIDSON: - In loving memory of Lance-Corporal Mark Davidson, killed in action at Lesdain, France, October 8th, 1918. Also Private Arthur Davidson, killed in action at the Battle of the Somme, September 26th, 1916.

*"They sleep beside their comrades,
In Hallowed graves unknown'
But their names are writ in letters of gold
In the hearts they left at home."*

Inserted by their father and mother, brothers and sisters.



HE whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

*Lt Col. David Davidson
Canterbury Inf. Regt., N.Z.F.*



HE whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self-sacrifice, giving up their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten.

*Pvt. Arthur Davidson
Canterbury Inf. Regt., N.Z.F.*



**PRIVATE
ARTHUR DAVIDSON
KILLED IN ACTION
26th SEPT. 1916 AGED 22
AT REST.**

**LANCÉ CORPORAL.
MARK DAVIDSON
KILLED IN ACTION.
8th OCT. 1918 AGED 22.
AT REST.**

		Agnes (1885) Frederick (1886) Charles (1888)	David DAVIDSON NEXT OF KIN: 11 Archer St Timaru (A) NEXT OF KIN: 23 Edward St Timaru (M) DOB: 01.10.1856 Died: 15.05.1928
		Dad's Father Edward DAVIDSON DOB: 21.12.1889, Died 29.12.1960	Married
	Ivy RUSSELL	Arthur DAVIDSON DOB: 24.07.1893 KIA: 26.09.1916	Ann DORWARD DOB: 27.08.1861 Died: 28.04.1948
	Arthur Edward DAVIDSON DOB: 21.08.1921 Died: 21.06.1981	Mark DAVIDSON DOB: 10.11.1895 KIA: 08.10.1918	
Brian John DAVIDSON, DOB: 02.12.1949	Dorothy McMILLAN	Henry (1897) Georgina (1901)	
	Gwen SMITH		
Cheryl Joy HANSEN, DOB: 05.01.1953			
		Jane Laurie Hastie (1872) Robert John (1874) Eliza Finnie (1875) Janet Louisa Fulton (1877)	
Richard Warren DAVIDSON, DOB: 05.01.1964	Alexander Raymond BROWN Uncle Ray	Agnes Kate BROWN, 363 Cargill Road, Dunedin, DOB: 21.12.1879, Died:02.02.1948	
	Ella Elizabeth DAVIDSON DOB: 26.12.1919 Died: 25.03.1887	Julia Chalmers (1882)	
	William Alexander BROWN Uncle Bill DOB: 26.02.1918	William Alexander BROWN DOB: 10.07.1883 KIA: 12.10.1917	John BROWN DOB: 31.12.1839, Died: 25.12.1888
	John Renfrew BROWN Uncle John	Mum's Father Alexander James BROWN DOB: 13.09.1884, Died: 24.10.1937	Married
		John Renfrew (1886)	Catherine Meek HASTIE NEXT OF KIN: 363 Cargill Road Dunedin DOB: 24.11.1847 Died 26.01.1931

NOTES

(1) We first thought George Herbert Hansen, Gray's grandfather, was recommended to receive the Military Medal because of acts of gallantry in the field on 12th October 1917 at Passchendaele but, following research and contacting various authorities, we have since found that it was on 26th August 1918, during the Battle of Bapaume. George Hansen was a driver for the Divisional Ammunition Column and attached to the Light Trench Mortar Division of the 1st Brigade. Mark Davidson was in the Canterbury 2nd Battalion which was positioned east of the Bapaume-Beugnâtre road, on the morning of the 26th August and in the afternoon it was sent back into bivouacs in and round Biefvillers and engaged on digging trenches for the defence of the village. Meanwhile on 26th August 1918, the 1st and 3rd Brigades had crossed the Bapaume-Beugnâtre road, but had made little progress in front of St. Aubin and beyond Avesnes. The 1st Battalion remained in the line till the following night (27th/28th).

(2) Conscription in New Zealand was effective because the New Zealand Division had a constant 20,000 troops throughout the war, consisting of both experienced and fresh soldiers. Australia did not have conscription during WW1. Australian enlistments totalled 416,809 and less than 10% of enlistments were in the years 1917 and 1918. Canada did have conscription but apparently it was ineffective.

(3) **Life in the Trenches**

While the drama of combat – going over the top, facing machine-gun fire and enduring terrifying artillery barrages – naturally dominates historical accounts of the Western Front, in reality, large-scale battles were rare. Most of a soldier's time in the trenches involved tedious scheduled rotations through various trench lines and rear area billets.

The troops spent only a few days a month in a front-line trench. Daily life here was a mixture of routine and boredom – sentry duty, kit and rifle inspections, and work assignments filling sandbags, repairing trenches, pumping out flooded sections, and digging latrines. Any free time was usually spent reading or writing letters or diaries, playing cards or trying to snatch a few moments of sleep. Still, life in the front line was always dangerous. Snipers' bullets and stray shell-bursts were constant hazards. The enemy also day and night engaged in harassing barrages of shell fire (as we did) hoping to hit our lines. Periodically, the trenches were subjected to heavy artillery bombardments in support of raids and patrols, or against groups of troops moving up to the line.

Surviving in mud

Apart from the Germans, the New Zealanders' biggest enemy on the Western Front was the mud. Indeed, the flooded trenches and churned landscape of the battlefields are among the most potent symbols of the First World War. This was particularly evident at Passchendaele, which was notoriously sodden due to the wet weather and the high water-table of this low-lying area, much of which was reclaimed marshland. Conditions were made much worse by the shelling, which had disrupted normal drainage.

Finding a dry spot to rest or sleep was often a challenge even though pumps were used to remove water from trenches and dugouts. Many troops succumbed to trench foot, a fungal infection caused by immersion in cold water. Rats and lice were soldiers' constant companions: rats, having gorged on corpses, allegedly grew 'as big as cats'; lice were the (then unknown) vector of another common wartime ailment, trench fever.

The stink of war

Then there was the smell. Stinking mud mingled with rotting corpses, lingering gas, open latrines, wet clothes and unwashed bodies to produce an overpowering stench. The main latrines were located behind the lines, but front-line soldiers had to dig small waste pits in their own trenches.

Gas attacks

Soldiers in the front line trenches had to guard against gas attacks. By 1916, both sides were using poison gas and had developed measures to minimise its impact, notably increasingly sophisticated gasmasks. While the sulfide-based blister agent 'mustard gas' – so-called because of its smell – was

only used from late 1917, it became notorious because of the injuries it caused to skin, lungs and eyes. The choking agents chlorine and phosgene were more commonly used gases.

The application of chloride and lime to protect against disease and infection only added to the stink. While the sights, smell and noise of the front line frequently overwhelmed new arrivals, old hands quickly became hardened to the discomforts and dangers of trench life.

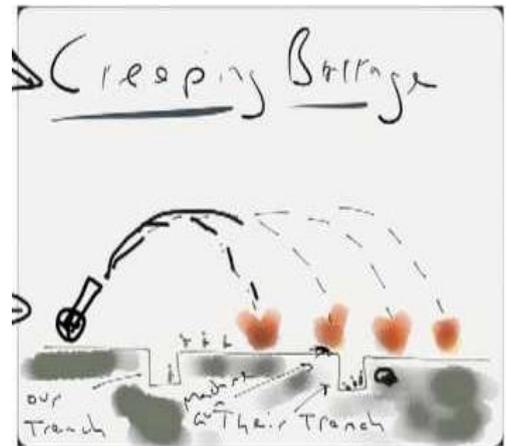
Night work

At night, the trenches often became hives of activity. Despite the continued risk of night bombardment or trench raids, the cover of darkness allowed troops to attend to vital supply and maintenance tasks. Rations and water were brought to the front line, and fresh units swapped places with troops returning to the rear for rest and recuperation. Construction parties beavered away repairing trenches and fortifications, laying duckboards and wire and preparing artillery positions.

To help detect enemy activity along the front, both sides established observation ('listening') posts in front of their trenches. Patrols were also sent into no-man's land to help familiarise soldiers with the battlefield terrain, locate enemy listening posts, and identify gaps in the wire defences where German patrols entered no-man's land. An hour before daybreak, everyone would stand to in readiness for action as another day dawned over the bleak battlefield.

- (4) The letter from Arthur Davidson to his brother Henry implies that Henry tried to enlist prior to July 1916. Henry was only 18 then. The Military Service Act was passed on 1 August 1916. This required all men aged between 20 and 45 to register for the conscription ballot. Ballots were held almost every month between November 1916 and October 1918 and resulted in 138,034 men being called up for military service, but only 19,548 ultimately served overseas, some 20% of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Henry was called up to enlist in December 1917 but appealed the decision and was allowed leave until 1 April, 1918. He was called up again on 5th April 1918 and trained in camp in New Zealand for several months. He was demobilised on 23rd November 1918. Frederick was called up for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on 14th May 1918. He was 32, married with one child. He spent time at Featherston Camp before being demobilised on 29th November 1918.
- (5) Douglas Haig was a top British military leader during WW1. He was a cavalryman, and he always optimistically anticipated breakthroughs (the decisive offensive), followed by cavalry exploitation, rather than a step by step advance. Haig's major offensives at the Somme in 1916 and at Passchendaele on 31st July 1917 failed. On 9th October he again commanded his cavalry to deliver a decisive blow but this also failed, due to the unfavourable conditions on the front. Cavalry could not charge forward and attack in those extreme muddy conditions. Haig has been criticized for his ignorance of conditions at the front. His distant but powerful personality (and the possibility of dismissal) tended to intimidate liaison officers, staff officers, and senior commanders, who often told Haig what he wanted to hear. Additionally, Haig's Staff College training decreed that a commander should set strategy and then step aside and leave tactics to subordinates. Together, these two factors detached Haig from reality at the front and from the tactical side of day-to-day action.
- (6) Each man was wearing a heavy trench coat and had to carry his rifle and bayonet, Mills bombs, smoke grenades, a satchel with clothing, rations and contraband additions – books, diary, letters, photos etc, and tied to their backs - a groundsheet with a cardigan and blanket wrapped up in it - plus a pick or a shovel to dig in. His bayonet, scabbard and his own personal entrenching tool would be attached to his webbing. Plus ammunition, normally 200 rounds if it was available, steel shrapnel helmet, gas helmet, filled waterbottle. At least 65lbs.
- (7) A 'Creeping' Barrage moved slowly forward, throwing up dirt clouds to obscure the infantry who advanced close behind and to break up the German barbed wire. The barrage would reach the enemy lines and suppress as normal (by driving men into bunkers or more distant areas) but the

attacking infantry would be close enough to storm these lines (once the barrage had crept further forward) before the enemy reacted. That was, at least, the theory. It had to be arranged well beforehand because if it did not advance in almost perfect synchronization there were problems. If the soldiers moved too fast they advanced into the shelling and were blown up; too slow and the enemy had time to recover. If the bombardment moved too slow, allied soldiers either advanced into it or had to stop and wait, in the middle of No Man's Land and possibly under enemy fire; if it moved too fast, the enemy again had time to react.



- (8) Private Sydney George Stanford was 15 1/2 when he enlisted and went to France with the 14th Reinforcements. He was a stretcher bearer at Passchendaele and was only 17 in October 1917. These are transcripts from his Online Cenotaph:-

On being a stretcher-bearer at Passchendaele 12–14 October 1917. It rained and rained and bloody rained, and rained and rained, see. Just like here in the autumn time, when it comes to rain and it was cold. And we were picking them up from a gathering point as a regimental aid post. Well there were hundreds of men laying out, around. You couldn't get them inside, it was an old German concrete emplacement and you couldn't get them all inside, but the doctors were working inside.

And they were just laying around where they'd been dumped by the stretcher-bearers from off the field and at one period I believe there were 600 stretcher cases laying round the place in the wet and cold, just dying there where they were dumped off. They weren't even laying on stretchers, just laying on the ground with an oil sheet tied over them if anyone thought to do that, or if one of their mates could do it. Just laying there, because the stretchers were used for picking up other men, you see, there couldn't be a stretcher for every stretcher case. We just carried till you couldn't carry any more. You just went until you couldn't walk really, you just went until you couldn't walk.

How men died. And poor Jim was laying there cuddled up in a heap as men die. Don't forget we was all young, we didn't die easy. You don't die at once, you're not shot and killed stone dead. You don't die at once. We were all fit and highly trained and of course we didn't die easy, you see. You were slow to die and you'd find them huddled up in a heap like kids gone to sleep, you know, cuddled up dead.

Wounded men at Passchendaele. There was one place at Passchendaele ... where we heard a man crying at night out in front and went out and we couldn't find him and we heard him crying part of the next day. Calling, you know, calling, sort of crying, not screaming or anything, crying out. We just knew there was a wounded man lying down under something you see. We never found that man. That's the only thing that's stuck in my memory. The others, I've seen them lay gasping and panting and scratching up the dirt with their fingernails on their face and all crawling around semi-delirious and all sorts of things.

- (9) Cargill Road changed its name to Hillside Road in the early 1950's. Agnes Brown continued to live at 363 Hillside Road until her death in 1948. My husband's parents lived at 325 Hillside Road when Gray was born in 1956 and he lived there until he was seven.

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Eleventh Hour of the Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month – 100 Years – Armistice Day 2018

