

Bert Henson Diary No 3 continued from "Diaries5.Doc"

Sunday January 20th 1918 Grand Crist to Ouderdom The course came to an end today. As a matter of fact we closed down at 8 p.m. last night. The fellows of the "clickety-click" and the 49th Div had to get away early. The Napier tender came around for the gear and I went back to Boeschefe in it. Got my tin hat and returned to the ex Station. Busied myself in cleaning up and putting billet into decent order during rest of morning. At the invitation of... [there seems to be a page missing here]...today dozens passing over here to and from the line. Many of our bombing planes passed overhead during the evening. The night was fine and moonlit and things must have been warm for Fritz in his back areas.

Tuesday 22nd January Parade at 8.30 a.m. During morning flag drill, buzzer etc. Had the afternoon off. Recreational training! There are a couple of Auckland N.C.O's assisting with training of the chaps in signalling. There are about 43 to train. They come from the four battalions of the Brigade while two come from 1st M.G. Coy. In the evening Jack Norman and I went to the YMCA. Did a little writing and listened to a lecture by a YMCA man on sex relationships. It was quite an interesting little address. What not to do and how to do it! No. I malign him!

Wednesday January 23rd 1918 Scottish Lines (Ouderdom) Parade 8.30 a.m.-12 noon, 1 p.m.-4 p.m. Buzzer, flag drill, Station work. Lecturette. - Jack and I went over to YMCA in the evening. Saw Harold Funkey who had just returned from Paris. He was bubbling with incident, I was reminiscent- cheerfully. Harold proposed taking Paris leave again vice "Blighty.". For myself a trip to Scotland will do nicely for the next holiday. Planes were again busy today and this evening watched some small chasers doing some marvellous tricks. We seem to have some very fine machines now, of great speed, climbing power and machines which can be manoeuvred splendidly. The night was fine above and our bombers were continually passing over on the way to strafe the Hun.

Monday January 28 1918 Scottish Lines (near Ouderdom) Nothing much of interest has occurred since my last entry. The battalion moved into the line on Saturday afternoon. A few more reserves came back into this camp - in Signals - Bowie, Roake and Prout, all of whom have some slight excuse or ailment - sprained ankles, sore feet or something like that. Yesterday was a particularly raw, damp cold day. A fairly heavy fog hung low all day and obscured the sun. A church parade was held in the morning. Parenga and I went out and got some dinner at a little place near by. Eggs, stewed apples and bread, coffee, after which we walked over to Reninghelst. Went to YMCA there and wrote a letter to Katy. Returned to camp in time for tea. Weather was much improved today. Usual parades.

Tuesday January 29th Weather has been really fine today. The sun shone most kindly. The ordinary signal parade in the morning and in the afternoon recreational training. In the evening from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. indulged in a little lamp-reading practice Baksheesh!

Wednesday January 30th Scottish Lines (nr Ouderdom) As the result of an overnight resolution I rose promptly at reveille 6.30 ack emma! I have not yet mentioned the music to which we are treated at this camp. At 6.30 a.m. one's slumber ends to the strains of the bagpipes.

Then we march on to and off the parade ground to the lively march tunes of a brass band. The Piccadilly stunt at midday is enlivened by the efforts of the four brass bands of the Brigade massed. Finally we have half an hour's brass band music at tea time. Oh dear me yes, we're most musical! Today was wonderfully fine - like a beautiful Spring day. One might have imagined the month May. With not a little pleasure I note buds on different trees and shrubs. A most cheerful sign of an early Spring. If this weather continues the mud will quickly disappear. Yesterday I parted with a couple of most intimate friends who have constantly been with me since I was at Saily nearly fourteen months ago - I got a new pair of boots. A few naval shells screeched over high and fell a mile or two back today. Our planes taking full advantage of the good conditions were busy today. The air was full of their drone all day.

Friday February 1st 1918 (Scottish Lines) In the weather of yesterday and today there has been a radical change. Foggy, raw piercingly cold days taking the place of their bright Spring-like immediate predecessors. Anything but agreeable. This afternoon was devoted to recreational training, football match etc. Muddy underfoot. Went down to Ouderdom and cashed B.P.O this afternoon. Icicles hang from the branches. It is indeed arctic. The battalion is coming out either tonight or tomorrow morning. The band is going up to the camp where the battalion will rest.

Saturday February 2nd 1918 A slight thaw today but still bitterly cold. Had a series of visual reading tests today. Saw Bill Glasgow. He has recently been to Paris and also to England. Returned from Paris on a Saturday and went to England the following day. Lucky dog! Well I suppose I could get my Blighty leave too but have decided to wait for summer days. Bill and I went on Blighty leave together last year.

Sunday February 3rd Scottish Lines Both last night and today found me feeling not quite "in the pink." A slight touch of 'flu methinks. The infantry part of this camp school broke up yesterday and some of the fellows went up to battalion. A lot of 1/Auck fellows invaded the hut in which I live at present and the result is now it is uncomfortably crowded.

Wednesday 13 February 2/NZ Field Hospital (nr Abeele) Ten days since my last entry! - but not much missed. The weather during the week past has not been very favourable. Chiefly dull, rainy and often windy. The old work of training at the school still carried on. The routine of the thing gets rather monotonous. Ted Arnold came down with the information that more of our chaps would be required when the battalion moved into the line this time. Jack Norman was one who went up from the

school. Now I suppose I must explain reason of heading above. On Sunday morning after a rotten night woke to find I was feeling very much out of sorts, in fact far from inclined to get up and go to church parade. Sent round to be excused and later Mr Lockie sent a medical chap

round to my hut to see me. Temperature was found to be 102.6 and as result I was hustled off to hospital. From near the camp a horse-drawn ambulance conveyed me with others to an ambulance station near Dickebusch. Here we were redirected, sifted or sorted, whichever you like and I continued my journey in a motor ambulance which brought me down to the place where I am now near 2NZ Field Hospital, near Abeele. I am as a matter of fact quite near to where I was on the wireless course. Don't know exactly what is wrong with me but have a suspicion it's a touch of trench fever. Felt very rotten when I landed here but now after three days am considerably improved. First forty eight hours I subsisted on milk diet - Glaxo, arrowroot, a biscuit or two and bread and butter, and "visions" of a big plateful of steak with proportionate companion dishes of roast or fried potatoes, not to mention fried onions! What! The unfortunate being who perforce has to exist on milk diet in hospital for months or even weeks has my sincere sympathy. I was indeed happy when yesterday (Tuesday) my menu was changed and I was given rabbit and pudding for dinner. Fell upon it greedily. A similar meal was served me again today at midday. Was allowed yester - and have been permitted this afternoon, to get up and dressed and wander about the ward. Am in a very fine ward - best in hospital I'm told - and extra large and specially designed Nissen Hut. Well ventilated, bright and really excellent for this purpose. It contains thirty beds. Ministering unto one there are no angels in white, or grey (much would one desire them!) but the orderlies who see to our needs are very decent chaps, obliging and thoughtful. By the way Drs Kemp and Barnett (late of T'pe) are in this hospital. I don't anticipate being here very long. Am already feeling much better. Fairly heavy rain fell last night and the sky is still overcast.

Sunday February 17th 1918 Scottish Lines, near Ouderdom As the above heading intimates, I am out of hospital and back at the school. I arrived here yesterday afternoon. On Thursday I went out of the ward into a tent where I stayed for a couple of days. Would get up about 7 a.m., have breakfast and after the inspection between 9 and 10 a.m. have the rest of the day to myself. Felt very rotten on Friday but had improved greatly next day, sufficiently so to warrant my discharge from hospital. Got a pass to enable me visit the base camp near Abeele. The morning was bright and almost genial. On the way called in and saw my Belgian farmer friend Jerome DeLouck whose place I was at on the wireless station about a month ago. Both he, madame and "Grand-pere" were delighted to see me, pleased that I should not have forgotten them. M'sieur showed me a paper which he had picked up after it had been dropped from a Hun aeroplane into a field near by. It was a paper "d'Ardennes," printed in French but of course under Hun control. Its extract of French and British official communiques were quite correct, so m'sieur assured me. A page of advertisements I noticed was devoted

solely to Hun products. Bidding the DeLoucks goodbye, I went on to the Base camp where I expected to find Dib. Did not see him but learnt from a cousin of his who was there that he was still in England. Was very surprised to come across Jack McKain who is now a sergeant-major with prospects of going away for a commission next month. We were mutually very pleased to see one another and had a lot to talk about. Had dinner with Mac and returned to the hospital about 1 p.m. in time to draw my pack etc and get ready to depart. The pack-store man was unable to find my rifle so I came away without it. A horse-drawn ambulance conveyed me, together with several others, to the recuperement [sic] camp at Ouderdom. Here I drew a few shortages and completed on foot the remainder of my journey to Scottish Lines. Had been away almost a week. Now today, Sunday 17th, I went up to Walker's Camp where the battalion is at

present. Saw most of the boys. All O.K. Also saw the bootmaker and the tailor and got a pair of boots and a pair of trousers! Bagley, Hall and Bowie expect to go on English leave in a day or two, while Ted Arnold anticipates a trip to Paris in the near future. Bill Glasgow had some interesting snapshots to show me. The day was very fine and the walk was enjoyable. Returned in time for tea.

Wednesday February 20th 1918 Scottish Lines I started toil again with the school on Monday on which day we had an ordinary programme of training. Tuesday was a beautiful, warm and almost summer day. Class I after going down to the baths near Ouderdom spent the rest of the working day on a scheme of stations - visual. Quite enjoyable and a break from the monotony of the ordinary syllabus of training. Personally took things easy. Don't feel much like bustling yet. Trench fever, you know, has its after-effects, what! The old Boche has been over in his bombing planes the last couple of nights, dropping a few of his eggs. It's a long time since I heard the pulsating drone of his engines. Seemed quite homely! Like old times, yes, yes, yes.... A rather severe change in weather today, very cold and a drizzle during the afternoon. Lamp station work during morning and buzzer in the huts in the afternoon. Oh, I mustn't omit to record that a school team played Rugby against a team from the West Yorks and succeeded in beating them 9 to nil.

March 2nd (Saturday) Scottish Lines The weather, ah yes, I'm thinking about it. Since my last entry we have experienced sunshine and rain and snow, we've gone right back to January weather. Cold! It fairly pierces one through and through. Snow fell for an hour or so after 8 p.m. and the ground is now patches of black and white. The strong wind which prevails is absolutely Arctic. Don (Wilson), Mac and I are now enjoying a hut to ourselves and we are very comfortable. Have managed to scrounge some wood and I now sit before a cheery little blaze. In fact I've been sitting before it for some time this evening, gazing into the embers or at the curling flames as they lick the wood. About a week ago the battalion moved from Walker's Camp down to Halifax. They send up to the line working parties daily. Believe they have been on salvage work. Last week I paid the dentist a visit and had a filling seen to. A cookery school was commenced near here nearly 10 days ago, since when the bill of

fare has improved out of recognition. The "tucker" has been prepared excellently and in a manner varied. We greatly appreciate the break from the usual monotonous fare. We have had roast meat, rissoles, sea pie, hash, bacon, porridge, ham, stew (the latter excellent but fortunately not frequent!), together with potatoes, carrots, turnips etc. and then numerous puddings. Oh, that they might always cook like this! The other day I received a cable from home advising me that money had been remitted to Paymaster, London for me. Am now set for leave at any time. Still I think I'll hang out till about May. Ted Arnold has gone on leave to Paris.

Friday March 8th 1918 Halifax Camp The school has ended at last, and as the heading above indicates, I have changed my "residence." Towards the latter part of the past week the weather had changed favourably and today was almost like summer. Filled one with a sense of new life and brightness. We have been busy testing the signallers this week. Some have done very creditably, while a few have been rather disappointing. On the whole though I think the results are very satisfactory. Today was held a drill competition between the various platoons representing the battalions of the 1st Brigade of the school. Result was: 1st Wgtn first, 2nd

Auck second, 2 Wgtn third - the model platoon a glorious last. Left the lines at about 5 p.m. and arrived up here about three quarters of an hour later. Last night Don, Mac and I went into Poperinghe and had a pleasant evening. Black and White and Schweppes! There has been very considerable artillery activity lately and one hears of numerous raids by both sides. A prelude I expect to the big stunt which the papers assure us is imminent. Don't know how much there is in it but things are bound to get moving shortly. Saw in the distance today a plane coming down in flames. It came down in a spiral nosedive. Could not tell whose it was. I have at different times seen numerous planes come down in this manner and I might say the sight is far from pleasant to behold and to think of a couple of men helpless and being roasted to death away up there where they can't be helped.

Saturday March 9th Halifax Camp Weather was beautiful today. Went to baths in the morning and to a pigeon lecture in the afternoon. We are to move out back from here in the morning, although this evening there was some doubt as to whether we would. Seems to be the idea in the air that the promised Hun move might eventuate in a day or so and we might be required in reserve at least.

Sunday March 10th Halifax Camp to near Staples We shifted today alright. Parties went up on fatigue as usual but when their job was completed entrained up near Birr Cross Roads while we, the remainder at camp, leaving at about 11.30 a.m. marched and caught the same train near Branshoek. Leaving there at about 1.30 p.m. got along well until a junction this side of Caestre was reached. Here we had a fairly long delay but getting going again reached Ebbingham at about [gap]. Detrained here and after having a drink of cocoa and some biscuits, chewing gum and cigarettes provided by the YMCA, set off for Staples about 5 kilos distant. It was really refreshing to see the different

kind of people out this way. A bevy of fair ones with quite a Parisian air about them were a great contrast to the rather heavy Belgian peasant type we had become accustomed to seeing lately. Tres joli! Marching at the head of the column we (Hdqrs) dropped the Coys before we reached Staples. We came straight on through the village and we are now about a kilo and a half the other side to where the Coys are. Signallers are billeted up in a loft at a farm and while it doesn't look very enticing it may prove more comfortable than we expected it would. There are bunks (of wire netting stretched across frames) and for mine I managed to get a bundle of straw from the farm people. Shortly after arriving here I went out and in a near-by farm house got a meal of fried eggs after which I felt more ready to fix up the bunk etc. Making enquiries I found out that I could [get] a private billet near by. A girl at the house where I had the eggs very kindly went across to this place and enquired for me. There are some very nice people about here. Now later tonight I heard that all battalion signallers are to report to their respective companies tomorrow morning for recreational training. Splendid (I don't think). I'm not altogether overjoyed at the prospect of this, it may upset my little plans about the private billet. We'll see. Some of our bombing planes have been droning over to strafe the Hun this evening. Time was advanced an hour last night - we now have summer-time. Today I think was the finest we've enjoyed this year. Real summer.

Monday March 11 1918 Near Staples Another beautiful day. A blue haze hung low all day but the sun shone brilliantly. It was so warm in the afternoon that I took my tunic and cardigan

off. After dinner was busily employed running a telephone line from the Orderly Room to the farm where the transport are billeted. Jack Cains was with me. While I was thus employed the others at the billet were having their kits inspected. After tea I had to go up to the O.R. with wire and phone and lay a line from there to D.W.C. billet which was some distance away. Ennis came with me and Ted Arnold came a little later. Had several awkward overhead crossings to fix up and did not get finished until after 8 p.m. Arriving back at the billet had refreshments at the farm house.

Tuesday Mar 12th Near Staples Another beautiful day. Really glorious. We of the battalion section indulged in a little visual practice in the morning. After lunch were told that we would have to shift to other billets. We were out of our billeting area. Rather annoying after we had got settled. Took most of our gear along to this new place, which isn't very enticing, and returned to the Grand Farm for tea.

Wednesday March 13th 1918 Near Staples Everything is looking fine and promising - of a full and early realisation of Spring. The shoots of the hawthorn, the bramble, the willow and other trees are bursting and a week or so of this weather will see a great transformation. It's very heartening. An

inspection in the morning and a little squad drill to brighten the section up. The Companies are carrying out a syllabus of recreational training. I believe we are supposed to do this with them also but so far we have not done so. Fitted up a phone exchange in this billet today. Signallers are to be on duty here between hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. After tea Hdqrs had a game of football with the transport. It resulted in a draw of 3-all. In the game Bill Thomson injured his shoulder.

Thursday March 14 Rain fell last night and this morning and today for the most part the sky has been overcast. It cleared somewhat late this afternoon and tomorrow I think will be fine. Company Signals came along and were put on buzzer a fuller practice. We changed again into other billets this afternoon. Our new place of abode is a great improvement on our last. It is a large loft with plenty of straw and besides providing ample room will be warm. At this farm, trained up the brick wall, is a thing of joy to the eye (and mind) - a plum tree in blossom. This evening "Spot" Holmes, having secured the loan of some gloves, we indulged in a few bouts out on the green. No casualties. This till nearly eight when we adjourned and quenched our thirsts at a nearby "estam'," following which we purchased some eggs from madam at the farmhouse here and took them up to the farmhouse we came from today and had them cooked. Then to bed where I sat up and scribbled this. Bon nuit!

Friday March 15th Near Staples Old age is creeping upon me! I'm twenty three today and

didn't have a holiday or a birthday cake either! Quelle dommage! The weather is simply superb. After tea Ted Arnold, Oscar Johnson and I walked into Bavinchone which is about 3 kilos from here. I had been there before when at the school at Zuitpeene. In a very decent and up to date estam' we celebrated the event of the day over a few bottles of muscat and oporto. Several of the other boys of the section rolled in and altogether we spent a very convivial evening. One or two I'm afraid found the wines heavy!

Saturday Mar 16 1918 near Staples Parade and training in the morning. On Monday there is to be an inspection by the G.O.C. This entails the cleaning of equipment, the blanco-ing of web gear. In the afternoon I was going into Hazebrouck to get the necessary for the section but learning that the Hun had been shelling the place (which of course, a railway junction of importance, the line to Ypres branching off from here) and that all shops were closed, I decided to go to St Omer instead. No bikes being available, I walked about a couple of kilos to Trois Rois, which is on the Route Nationale running between Cassel and St Omer. Here took a motor lorry which took me almost to Nieppe and then from the latter village jumped on another which took me into St Omer where I arrived at 4.45 p.m. After visiting about all the canteens in the town I [found] sufficient blanco at one of them where also I purchased a watch, my other having been lost at Lothingham [?name] last September. I got an Ingersoll Radiolite for the huge sum of 11 francs. Had tea at the A.E.F. canteen, a meal of roast beef, potatoes and beans

and pudding costing but 1fr 30. Very cheap, very nice, very clean! The town was quite lively looking and numbers of WAACS didn't spoil the picture. I saw some bonny girls (that's hardly the adjective) who made one wish he resided nearer the town. Some I noticed wore the brassard of the Signal Service. They are probably telegraph and phone operators. Other people I noticed were an American Flying Corps officer and several Sammies. I also met an Aussie signaller of the 3rd Div who was at Zuitheene with me last year. I do not recollect his name. He told me that Dan Rabbit was Sgt of his section and going strong. If I can get into St Omer next Sunday I shall probably see Dan. I returned in the motor lorry which brought back the Auckland picquet. Leaving the town at about 9.10 p.m., arrived at Trois Rois at 10 p.m. and tramped back to billet.

Sunday March 17th Nr Staples St Pat's Day. A wonderfully fine day which we for the most part of it occupied in cleaning and blanco-ing our equipment in preparation for tomorrow's inspection. Seems a lot of rot to have to expend so much time and energy out here, but, of course, there are two sides to be considered. In the morning I went down to the tailor and got a new pair of "strides" and puttees, while the others went on church parade. This evening, as on every fine night lately, our bombing planes have been most active. As soon as the dusk sets in one hears their drone and sees their lights as they pass over to Strafe the Hun.

Monday March 18th 1918 Nr Staples The inspection by General Russell came off today. In the morning in full pack we were paraded and messed about in preparatory inspection. Then after lunch we paraded with the rest of the battalion in a field down the road. We Sigs had to take the bikes on with us which is the first time we have done so for an inspection or anything else. I am inclined to believe we made a fair showing. The heads having scrutinised us to their satisfaction, we marched back to our billets. Tea over, Oscar, Ted and I walked over to M'me Cappel where we were billeted for a week or so last July. We had intended visiting the aerodrome near there but it being rather late by the time we got over that way we went on into the village. On the way I saw Sam Hardy. Doing well. In the village saw one or two old friends. Marie and Susanne, who seemed very pleased to see us. Set out on our homeward way a little after 8 and taking a road other than the one we came by succeeded in getting somewhat off the track. Still, on the beautiful evening the walk was most enjoyable and I was almost sorry when it ended at the billet at about 10.30 p.m.

Thursday March 21st Nr Staples Rumour's rife! There is considerable excitement in the air tonight. I first learnt about it from a Brigade chap when down in the village this evening, and it was to this effect: The Hun has either attacked or is about to launch something big. The Brigade is under orders to be ready to move out at any time perhaps tonight. It's simply great! The Auckland battalion which left here this

morning to go through a musketry course near St Omer has been recalled. Arriving back at the billet a little after 8 p.m. I found that our hampers had been packed in readiness. I call it a bon affair.

Friday March 22nd Nr Staples Well, we're still here. Carried on with the training in the morning and we anticipated having to get on the move late in the afternoon, but this did not eventuate. The transport came round and took our hampers away so things looked business-like. Have heard rather vague rumours about Fritz having made a big attack down Cambrai way and taking a village or so. This may be so but I don't place much credence in the rumour of his having taken a village or two. Spot Holmes and Richardson had to report to Brigade tonight as power buzzer men. I also went down to Brigade to get some cells and when there saw Girven who is also on the power buzzer stunt. By what I can gather I don't think we'll move out tomorrow, but when we do go it will be down the Somme way. It will at least be a change of scenery although I am quite satisfied with this pretty part around here. It's tranquil and very beautiful in this weather.

The food we have been getting lately is splendid. The best I've known the section to get. Every day we get roast beef, roast potatoes and also boiled and mashed potatoes. Breakfast is usually porridge and bacon or rissoles. Stew is a back number. Our planes are very numerous and busy and take full advantage of the good conditions prevailing. They are droning over day and night. The other day some very decent "baksheesh" parcels from NZ came to hand. Curious that usually they are distributed as we are about to move and can't make full use of them. Recently we have had to toss out all the surplus kit, but still the pack will be any amount heavy enough. We now carry 120 rounds of ammunition instead of the usual 50 for specialists. In my

previous entries have omitted to mention that Colonel Short is now OC with Major Turnbull on his right hand.

Saturday March 23rd 1918 Nr Staples And still we are with no definite information about our prospective move. Carried on with our training during the day as usual. The weather continues beautiful. The early crops (cereals) are showing up now and the cultivateurs are very busy getting the ground prepared and the seed sown. Today I received a pocket diary from Nellie. It's a splendid little affair and I suppose must now supersede this.

[next page empty, followed by these notes]:

Sun 24th Fine. Dep Nr Staples with baggage guard 3.30 p.m. and travelled in lorry to Cassel Stn. Accident. Mon 25. Bomber. Depart C 4.30 a.m. arr Ailly S.S. about 4 p.m. Off baggage guard. Left packs. Left A.S.S. 9.45 p.m., thro' Amiens 12 p.m. (26th) Halted 2.15 p.m. Slept in shed 6K N.E. of A. Started again 9 a.m. Dinner 12 - 2 p.m. Refugees etc Turcos [?name] Marched off again 2 p.m. Tanks arr Hedauville 3.50 p.m. Tea. Billets after good deal trouble. Wed 27th 12.30 a.m. up and away about 1 a.m. Brilliant moonlight. arr Colincamps 4.30 a.m. Work on lines 5 a.m. Bertrancourt 6 a.m. B'court 9.45 a.m. Courcelles after 10 a.m. (billets)

[Several empty pages follow, then the following poem]:

A Prayer for the Road's End

By Theodosia Garrison

Let me not picture Death as one Who stalks a helpless enemy. To blot away the sun
some day And lay relentless hands on me. Ney, rather let me think of him As one who, in
all kindness waits At the road's end, when shadows dim, To draw me gently through his
gates, And bade me like some kindly host, Who gives a long-expected guest The comfort
that he craves the most - The hospitality of rest. So may I think of him each day, While
the road shortens mile by mile Guessing the word that he will say, Almost familiar with his
smile. No foe with fury in his breath Shall charge me from some ambushed place. God
grant I make a friend of Death Long, long before I see his face. _____ From
Nash's - Pall Mall, June 1918

Friday April 5th 1918 Courcelles An interesting day? Well rather, if not strenuous. arriving
down in this village last night - after being relieved by the 4th "Dinks" and then tramping out
along for part of the way slushy roads and tracks - at a little after 9 p.m. I had to get busy fixing
up about gas guard and phone duties rations for the morning etc. The consequence was it was
nearly midnight when I got to bed on the hay in our old billet. Sleep for an hour or so and then I

came on a shift on the phones from 2 a.m. till 5 a.m. Naturally was rather tired when I turned in again at the latter hour and did not pay much heed to the heavy shelling of the village commenced by the Hun at the same hour (5 a.m.). Thought it was merely a strafe which would shortly abate. But it persisted and when I woke up for breakfast shells were still whining and screeching over, fortunately for the most part bursting in the other end of the village. Could now see it was more than an ordinary strafe. Metal and bricks flew about freely. At about 9.30 a.m. got orders to be ready to move immediately. A bit of a bustle ensued. When I was away for a few minutes at the signal office a couple of shells struck the roof of my billet and when I returned I found the show a wreck, in an L of a mess in fact. Two others occupied this place ... [there appears to be a page missing here] ... cellar of the estaminet he lies there huddled partly on his steering wheel- at his post. The car is only a few yards from here and those whose work it is have not yet had time to remove either the car or the body. In the room next to the one above this cellar lies the body of an English Battery Major who paid the great sacrifice. I have seen today more than "one twelfth" as Don would put it and on numerous occasions didn't feel too "certain" about my personal welfare. The bombardment commenced at 5 a.m. and continued strongly until about 1 p.m. I believe the barrage put it on the line around Colincamps and this side of it was pretty solid. It was thought probable that the Hun would renew his attack about 5 p.m. this evening but this didn't eventuate. Perhaps he'd got a sufficient taste of what NZers

were like this morning. I understand that as the result of the operation the Hun now occupies La Signe farm, a post out in front of our line. The very light garrison (only a few men) had not been sufficiently strong to hold it. In any case it is of little importance, overlooked as it is by our front line.

April 9th 1918 Courcelles to Colincamps This evening moved up and relieved the Dinks in front of Colincamps. We are battalion in support here, not in the front line. The day has been wet and the mud about has been considerable. The most of the Section is forward of here with the coys but Osk, Ted Halley, Tom Hogan and I are up in a cellar in the village for the night. We go up with the others tomorrow. The "others" by the way have had to make their own "possies." Some of them came up from Courcelles this afternoon and got started on them. Jack Parenga came back from leave last night. He has been away over four weeks, two of which he spent in Blighty and the other two in Callais where he was held up on his return journey. He says he had a great time. I'm sure he did.

April 10th Colincamps Didn't shift up to the battalion today and am remaining here again tonight. Shift tomorrow. The day has been overcast and foggy. Received two letters tonight, one from home, the other from QD.

Monday April 22 Bertrancourt & Bus-les-Artois A bright sunny day until this evening when sky became very overcast and a drizzling rain set in. Went to baths this afternoon just after lunch and Oscar and I then went on into Bus, where I saw Dave Woodhead. Sigs are on gas guard tonight and I am doing a shift now 11.15 p.m till 1.30 a.m. 23rd. The Hun has been engaging in a few mad artillery bursts on to a part not very far from here during this afternoon. What we took for a Hun plane flew very low over here tonight about 7 p.m. and farther back fired several flares. It possibly was a French plane but I don't think so. The wireless on 21/22nd reports "Capt Froiherr von Richthofen, the famous German airman crashed behind our lines

yesterday and was killed." In the same report the German official says that whilst leading his famous pursuit flight he brought down his 79th and 80th victim.

April 23rd 1918 In Bivouac near Bus and Bertrancourt Learnt today that the Hun plane which flew over here last night landed somewhere between Acheux and Doullens. It had lost its way. Believe it had a new type of engine. The day has been very fine. A number of Sigs toiled this morning sand-bagging bivvies for the "heads." In the afternoon went with Bagley into Bus. In nearby fields saw some French soldiers digging trenches.

April 24 1918 Into line near Hebuterne Day was foggy and favourable for our relief of the 15th battalion - Australians in front and to right of Hebuterne. It is just on left of sector we occupied when we first came to this part. We Signals left soon after dinner and an hour's tramp landed us there. The relief took place in the evening. Hdqrs is in a dug-out away down in the chalk some 30ft below the surface, very secure indeed. These kangaroos term the NZers "Kiwis." Was on duty 6 to 9 p.m.

April 25th The day was very misty and not favourable for observation by us or the Hun which fact is perhaps not a disadvantage to us just here for our location (of battalion Hdqrs) is in the open and on a fine day exposed to balloon observation. In this part, as in the sector we were in on the right, we have the advantage of position. We look down on the Hun. Linemen have been busy locating old buried routes, of which there are numbers in this part. They were just installed [?word] two years or so ago, I expect. A little rain fell this evening.

April 26th Line in Hebuterne The day has been again misty. Hear a rumour which alleges that the Dutch naval forces raided and succeeded in blocking the entrance to the Port of Zeebrugge and Ostend by sinking some old boats in them. This dug-out we occupy keeps remarkably fresh. It is connected by a tunnel about 30ft long to another similar subterranean chamber (occupied by the officers) and this allows a constant circulation of air. These deep dugouts are usually rather stuffy. This afternoon I indulged in a little adventure [?word]. [Several indecipherable words] of the others to Dus, a "[something]" for a test point in the bivvy. Last night Brigade asked for name of a Signal Sgt to be nominated for commission as sig officer. 'Dib' who is at [indecipherable word] was strongly recommended. This afternoon a couple of horsemen, presumably "heads," rode right up and around a part only a hundred yards or so from the front line. They were not molested. The Hun must have slept! April 27th 1918
In the Line near Hebuterne Another overcast day. A little after dinner Fritz strafed the sector on our immediate right heavily. He also put a few rounds this part, including one right into the test point which we dug yesterday. Learn the Hun now holds Kemmel Hill. I am now (5 a.m. 28th) on duty. Came on at 3 and go off at 6 a.m. Our artillery has intermittently during the night strafed the Boche with solid bursts of fire.

April 28th Some NZ mail arrived this afternoon but nothing came for me. Day was cloudy. Nothing unusual to record.

April 29th In the Line near Hebuterne An overcast sky for most of the day with a burst of sunshine this afternoon. Was occupied for a while apres midi in assisting in the digging of a trench in which to lay cable from here to test point. Am becoming an expert

"digger" now! No NZ mail for me today either. Tomorrow peut-etre! Got a letter from Dib tho; a breezy swinging epistle. He is now at [?word - looks like Seuig] and anticipates coming over here as soon as some one can be found to take his place as instructor. Replied to his letter tonight. Rain fell this evening. The Hun has been paying attention to a point forward, with 8-inch, but our people replied effectively.

[The rest of this loose-leafed diary consists of notes and addresses of little consequence, apart from the following note of dates:-]

From Cellar Farm to billets Bac-St-Maur Jany 1st 1917 Bac-St-Maur to Fleurbaix billets Jany 8th 1917 Left on leave Jany 12th 1917 Returned to Boulogne Jany 24th 1917 Rejoined battalion in billet at Fleurbaix Jany 27th 1917 From billet Fleurbaix into trenches HO43 Feb Trenches (HO43) to billets Fleurbaix [line

left blank] Billets Fleurbaix to trenches HO44 Trenches HO44 to Estaires Feb 22nd Estaires to Nieppe Feby 23rd Billets Nieppe to trenches GP3 (near Le Touquet) Feb 25th Trenches GP3 to billet Pt de Nieppe Billet Pt de Nieppe to trenches GP3 (Le Touquet) GP3 to camp Le Romarin March 14th 1917