

[Continued from file "DIARIES8.DOC"]

Friday Nov 1 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis From an early hour this morning the sound of solid bombardments forward were very audible. It lasted until about midday. Jack Miles, who went down from here this morning en route to Blighty on leave took over for me part of this diary which he will post. [This probably accounts for the fact that a large number of pages in the diary are loose, having at some stage been removed (the pages are perforated) and replaced] The signallers down here belonging to the 1st Battalion are now being trained as one class under Mr Low, 1/ Wgtn. A much better idea than training separately as battalions, for there were not sufficient sigs to do that satisfactorily. Went over to Caudry this afternoon. Wireless news [?word indecipherable] states Turkey and Austria-Hungary have signed an armistice. With Turkey the terms of the armistice includes a passage for the Allies through the Bosphorous and the occupation by Allied troops of the country necessary to assure this.

Saturday Nov 2 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis The day has been overcast and wintry. Parade finished for sigs now at midday. Have the afternoon free. A few of the conditions under which Germany can obtain an armistice are as follows: The laying down of arms by all troops excepting army commanders and the troops to march back to Hun land unarmed; the leaving behind of all munitions, guns, stores, etc; the occupation by Allied troops of the belt of country 30 miles within the German frontier except where the Rhine is nearer than that to the frontier; the German fleet to proceed to Heligoland and with that fortress to capitulate to the British fleet; all submarines to fly white flags and with open hatches to proceed to named allied ports. Since January 1917 Huns are estimated to have suffered 2 1/2 million casualties, 1 million of which are permanent. Since July 18th he has lost [number illegible] % of his 18,000 [word illegible].

Sunday Nov 3 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis There wasn't a great deal of sunshine but the weather otherwise was fair enough. Church parade, to which I went, was at 10.40 a.m. After lunch went with Parenga, who came up from Etaples a day or so ago, to a near-by aerodrome in which are housed Bristol 2-seater fighters. Succeeded in getting taken up by a Canadian pilot, a clever aviator and altogether a decent sort. Climbed to a height of 2800 feet and did, so the pilot afterwards told me, practically all the stunts there are in air fighting, with the exception of the vertical dive, which at that height would have been too risky. Looped the loop, did the full roll, the half roll, the vertical turn or bank and other minor twists and turns and dives. "Some" sensation! An experience which I would not have missed for worlds. Was very fortunate in going up with a pilot who did so much.

Monday Nov 4 1918 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis Wrote home last evening. Parade from 8.45 a.m. till 11.45 a.m. and then finished for the day. This afternoon I went over to a 'drome containing a squadron of F.E.5's but was unable to get up in one. The pilots, who were very decent about it, told me that orders

prohibiting the taking up of any person outside their own staff, had recently become much more stringent than "heretofore." So I didn't fly today! Heard that Dib has been awarded the D.C.M. and very pleased about this for he has earned it many times over. The battalion was supposed to go over the top this morning. I have heard no particulars.

Tuesday Nov 5 Beauvois-en-Cambresnis A wintry day with a good deal of rain. Buzzer reading and map lecture this morning in the lecture room. Hear the 'flu is about again and in an even more acute form. Precautions are being made with regard to ventilation, number of men in a room, etc. Seem to have a bit of "wind up" about it, but I believe it comes in a pretty malignant form. There is to be a parade tomorrow for administration of menthol. Le Quesnoy I hear has fallen, the garrison of 1500 surrendering. Details of the stunt are vague but I understand the Bde [?word] advanced about 7000 yards and got a fair haul of prisoners and guns. Wrote to M.D. tonight

Wednesday Nov 6 Beauvois-en-Cambresnis I am in isolation! One of the band chaps alongside whom I slept last night was evacuated to C.C.S. today suffering with flu. As a result the chap who slept on the other side of him and myself have found ourselves circumstanced as I have described above. After lunch we went round to a billet in which several other boys are in isolation, but not finding the place very inviting, we sought and found better. We have to ourselves a jolly decent little two-roomed cottage. Beds, tables, chairs, stove, a carpet on the floor and other comforts. We are in clover, absolutely. Ted Arnold, who has been sick at Codford, rejoined us here today.

Thursday Nov 7 1918 Beauvois Everything in the garden is generally splendid, especially the chrysanthemums which are in bloom. The few cabbage stalks, having lost their heads, have rather a vacant stare (?), the few fruit trees, bereft of foliage, look bare, but we can close the shutters of the windows and pile more fuel on the little stove and be as comfy as we could wish. We get our meals from the old cook-house, each taking a turn to bring them round. Then we are able to get plenty of spuds from the cellar and supplement our issue tuck. We have nothing to do in the way of parades. No complaints whatever! I hear tonight that we are to move in the morning, up to rejoin the battalion. It will be a big tramp.

Friday Nov 8 Beauvois to Villereau We were up at a little over 0500. Breakfast at 0600 and at about 0930, in fighting order, set off. We understood the battalion was near Le Quesnoy. The weather was wintry, at times a drizzling rain fell. Passed through Quiévy etc and reached Solesmes about 11.30. This is a very fine town and is comparatively intact. There are numerous civilians there. The buildings are generally of good architecture. We had about 40 minutes for lunch. Hear that 8 Hun plenipotentiaries had gone to Paris to sign the terms of armistice. There is considerable internal trouble in Germany. There is revolt in the navy and things look very hopeful. Marched into and through Le Quesnoy, a very fine old fortified town. It is surrounded by a great deep dry moat behind which are

strong earthworks. It bore very little signs of damage. Reached Villereau about 7 p.m.

Saturday Nov 9 Villereau The boys have a great deal to tell about their last stunt. It was a most successful and glorious affair and I very much regret it was my hard luck to be out of it. They enjoyed most unique experiences. For the most part they ran their wire ahead of the leading coys in attack and I understand that in one case they had reached the hdqrs of the new objective before the stunt started and were being delightedly welcomed by the French people

who were almost dilirious with joy at seeing them. About 6 of the sigs section, coming upon a whizz-bang battery in action, charged the guns, captured them and chased the fleeing gunners. They shot and took one prisoner. Besides this they got a great number of prisoners in cellars etc. They got souvenirs galore. Major McKinnon and Lt Burrell were killed.

Sunday Nov 10 1918 Villereau to Solesmes The French people made a great fuss of our boys. Fancy in an advance coming to a farm house and stopping for a cup of coffee! What a war! The boys have some great tales of their welcome by the almost joy-hysterical women and girls who embraced them, and kissed them and laughed and cried with utter joy and happiness. A number of chaps have since revisited these people and have been given a great time. I feel rather envious I might say! The Huns have until 1100 tomorrow to accept and sign the terms of armistice and it is generally felt that however severe they may be they will have to accept them. NZ's have had their last stunt I think. Today at 1 p.m. we left here (Villereau) and marched to Solesmes, arriving there at about 1750. I accompanied the limber to look after signal gear. We are in a fine house where we will spend tonight. Piano, music etc.

Monday Nov 11 Solesmes to Beauvois What an historic day this will be! This is the end of the world war, the greatest struggle in history. Germany has agreed to our terms of armistice, which means the finish; and hostilities ceased at 1100. This is the text of the wonderful message outside Brigade hdqrs at 1845 this morning: "Following from IV Corps aaaa [?word]: Hostilities will cease from 1100 today." It was joyful news and though there was little demonstration worthy of mention, everyone was marvellously pleased. The terms of armistice mean for Germany almost unconditional surrender. Canadians entered Mons this morning and Belgians entered Ghent. We left Solesmes at 0845 and arrived in Beauvois at 13.30. Am in a pretty comfortable billet, spring mattress etc. Received letter from Dave Woodhead. He is at West Runton, Norfolk.

Tuesday Nov 12 Beauvois A beautiful day at first. Only in a dull way could one realise that the war is over but the light is gradually breaking in upon me and I'm beginning to think what it all means to me. For one thing, NZ! After all these years, in a day or so 'twill be three, I can say with almost as much certainty as a man can define any event of the future, that

I'll see it again. It's home and civilisation. I anticipate though that it will still be a long time before we get off. The papers are full of it, most gratifying news - the downfall of the German empire. Revolution is rife there. Bavaria is proclaiming itself a republic. Things are pretty topsy-turvy. What a wonderful turn in affairs!

Wednesday Nov 13 1918 Beauvois We are enjoying beautiful weather, really wonderful considering the time of the year. The nights are keen and rather frosty but the days are clear and sunny. There is a strong rumour, more than a rumour in fact, that we are to start for the Rhine in a few days' time. The IV Corps is to be in the Army of Occupation, and of course we are included. Personally I welcome the prospect of seeing the country, but there is a number of the chaps who are against it. They want to get back to NZ tout de suite. Tonight, I hear, there was a deputation of a few hundred to Gen. Russell protesting against going to Herrenland. Very short-sighted of them for in any case many months will elapse before many can get away and one might as well be billeted in, say Cologne as being shut up in a dismal camp in Blighty.

Thursday Nov 14 Beauvois The deputation to the General headed last night by a conscript (one time on the staff of the Maoriland Worker) was rather a disgraceful and altogether a senseless affair. For one thing the war is not over until peace is signed, another is that our move to the Rhine will not in any way interfere with demobilisation (as these few misguided individuals had assumed it would) and moreover most of the boys want to go there. It was rumoured that we would have to trek all the way but personally, while realising that it would be a pretty solid march, this makes no difference to my desire to go. Originally it was intended that we should start in a day or so, but I hear it rumoured tonight that we would now not leave till Dec 2nd, and then we would go by train via Armentieres. There was a Div church parade this morning.

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Saturday Nov 16 Beauvois The weather has [I think there should be another word here] during the last few days, and still is very cold. Frosts at night. The ground remains frozen all day. One feels the necessity of a fire and although fuel of any kind is very scarce, we have so far managed to keep the home (?) fires burning by virtue of assiduous "scrounging."

Sunday Nov 17 Beauvois Many civilians have, during the past few days, returned here to their old homes. They come bringing back the few things they were able to take away with them. They carry these on all kinds of vehicles, push carts, barrows, perambulators, etc, and often they have been on the road for days. Others, more fortunate, have ridden back in lorries. A great many of these people had evacuated their homes at the beginning of last month and had gone back eastward. Others have for the last four years been refugees on the western side of the line.

The people who had lived in this house prior to Oct 1st last, returned today. They, an old man and woman, came from Bavai. They were very pleased to find things in as good order as they are, but some things must have caused them heart pangs. We have shifted into another room, leaving them two rooms for themselves.

Monday Nov 18 1918 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis My fountain pen makes its reappearance after having been to the pen doctor. There's a lot of use for it in the coming week or so. The Div went out on a route march this morning in the order they would be in if they had to move away

from here. I did not participate in this frivolity. The first snow of the season fell at about 11.15 a.m. today. It was not much, just sufficient to give the already frozen ground a very light sprinkling. With the other boys of our "maison" I went along to the Div theatre this evening and enjoyed a bright little show, "O Helen," given by the Kiwis. M'sieur, upon our return, brought us in some potatoes which madame had cooked for us, and then later invited us in for a cup of coffee. The poor old people are very grateful for one or two little things we have been able to do for them.

Tuesday Nov 19 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis Rather a cold dull day, so we had to put more fuel on the fire. This battalion this afternoon was out participating in Brigade manoeuvres. I being orderly sergeant stayed in. Our old m'sieur came in this evening and held conversation "avec nous" for an hour or so. Among us we could understand him fairly well and heard much that was interesting concerning the events about here during the past four years. he said that on the whole he found the German soldier pretty fair to him anyhow. He observed that during the first two years of the war the discipline of the Hun army was excellent, but in 1916, 1917 and 1918 it gradually became very bad and latterly the men used to do almost as they pleased.

[The following is written with the diary turned upside down]

Beauvois-en-Cambrensis 20.11.18 Nothing to record. Not worth the trouble of turning the page round, eh? Oh, I might record receipt of pay to the loud tune of 20 francs.

Thursday Nov 21 1918 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis The weather improved considerably today and the sun shone genially. A welcome change from what we have been experiencing the last few days. This afternoon went over to the aerodrome at Petit St Jeane and had a look at the numerous machines, including some beautiful little S.E.5's. The 56th Squadron is over there and it was to this unit that Ball and McCudden, the famous star airmen, belonged. It is a crack squadron. Then went on to Caudry. Many civilians have returned and many more are still arriving. Poor people, they have endured much. It is rumoured that the Hun city that we will occupy is Coblenz.

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Sunday Nov 24 Beauvois-en-C Church parade was held this morning in the Div theatre. Shortly after lunch with Charlie Bargh and James I went into Cambrai which is about 11 kilos from here. On the main road caught an ambulance car which took us most of the way. Walked the rest. Cambrai has been a very big town, almost a city, but it has suffered severely from bombardment of guns and aeroplanes. The station I understand used to receive very special attention from our airmen. We noted particularly the once very fine "Hotel de Ville" and the Cathedral de Notre Dame de Grace. Were unable to get into the latter but believe it contains

some very fine objets d'Art, sculptures, etc. The general architecture of the building is very pleasing, though of course many of them are totally destroyed by shell fire and incendiarism, while others are more or less damaged. There are numerous very fine streets and in the centre of the town is what must have been a rather beautiful park or garden. Here were parked numerous 6-inch naval guns with their tractors. About the town saw numerous repatriated prisoners, French and also some British. Poor chaps bore signs of much privation and hardship and were ill clad and shod. Spoke to some of the French toilers who told us they had suffered much. "Beaucoup travail, pas beaucoup manger."

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Wednesday Nov 27 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis We were to have gone for a route march this morning but orders came out late last night to the effect that we were to start our journey to Germany tomorrow. As a consequence the parade was cancelled. I spent a few minutes looking over my kit with a view to reducing its contents and weight for I understand we march in stages to Charleroi, from which place we take the train on to "der Vaterland." Charleroi is about 120 kilos distant so it's going to be a fair stroll with full pack. This afternoon I got signal stores ready-packed. This evening we were to have an allotment at the Div theatre but on account of the move that was ruled out.

Thursday Nov 28 Beauvois-en-Cambrensis Yesterday I returned my fountain pen again to have the nib exchanged. Also I wrote to Kodaks asking them to send my camera out. The old restrictions on cameras is now cancelled. Got up in good time this morning, and was just about ready, when orders came round cancelling the move. I understand we now go tomorrow in lorries which is very much preferable to tramping. 0200. Orders have now come out that we move off at 6.30 a.m. tomorrow and walk. So it's to bed we go early! A good deal of rain has fallen today and tomorrow's prospect is not of pleasant promise.

Friday Nov 29 Beauvois to Vendegies Was up early this morning about 5 a.m. The old people (Chatelaine) were also up early and made us coffee to take in our water bottles, which was indeed very decent of them. They're fine old people and scarcely know how to show their gratitude for what little we have done for them. Marched off at 7 a.m., passed thro' Bevillers [Biefvillers], where I saw cousin Bert, Priddeaux, Dixon and Geoff Hills, on through Quievy, the left of Solesmes, and arrived at

our destination for the day, Vendegies-surEcaillon, at about 1 p.m. We had covered about 12 miles, which we felt was quite far enough. Our blankets (2 each now) were carried on transport, but cobbled roads are rotten to march over and I was jolly glad when we arrived. Feet were sore.

Sigs were billeted in top of a fine modern house. Comfortable.

Saturday Nov 30 Vendegies to Wargnies We were on the road again shortly after 9 a.m. The morning was raw and foggy, but sun came out pleasantly towards midday. Among other villages, we passed through Maresches and Villers Pol. We were supposed to billet for the night at Wargnies le Grand but this arrangement was altered and we went to Wargnies le Petit. On account of congestion of traffic we were not able to take the shortest route today. Consequently instead of 5 miles we had to tramp about 12.

The people at this place are rather decent, giving us coffee baksheesh. By the way, have only substitute coffee which was supplied by the Hun. Tonight the old lady got the boy to bring us some wood for our fire. We arrived here this afternoon about 3 p.m.

Sunday Dec 1 1918 Wargnies le Petit to Bavay Station The old lady told us last night that our planes were busy bombing about here during the stunt. Have seen numerous evidences of their bombs. Were on the move again at 9.15 a.m. and as usual had to take the devious route instead of the direct. However, we arrived at Bavay [?Bavai] Station near Bavay about midday. We sigs got a pretty fair billet in an old estaminet but got pushed out of it a little later much to our disgust and annoyance. In the end we got settled comfortably. Near here is a huge quarry (granite or slate), an enormous crater now holding about 20 feet of water. Huns had used it as a bathing place and had fitted up sheds, spring boards, etc. There is a boat there and in this Ted and I had a little row. There is a big NZ mail in I hear.

Monday Dec 2 Bavay Station Didn't rise very early this morning. Breakfast was not until 7.45 a.m. Took things easily all day. After dinner went for a stroll into Bavay about a kilo distant. There are numerous civilians in the place but generally they were of the poorer class people who bore signs of the hardships and privations of the past four years. Shops were few and what they had to offer was pitifully scant. Practically nothing the Hun had seen to that. Tried to procure some p.c's of the place, but other than a tiny view of the monument in the "Place", could get nothing. The Hun had souvenired the lot. The town is a fair size. But most of the buildings are of ancient architecture. A 1st Wellington chap was run over by a lorry today and killed.

Tuesday Dec 3 Bavay Stn to nr Maubeuge Was on the trek again this morning at 10 a.m. Weather was unpleasant. Dull with a driving drizzling rain. Marched along the main Bavay-Maubeuge road until near the latter town when we switched to the right a little. Passed through the town, which is a really fine place. It is surrounded by ramparts and fortifications similar to those of Le Quesnoy. What I saw of it was quite intact except where in parts the Hun had blown up the

streets and roads and also bridges, the explosions of course demolishing the near-by buildings. There were many civilians here and they were manifestly overjoyed to see us. We are a kilo or so out of the town and are billeted in a very fine modern house. Wish we could spend a few days here.

Wednesday Dec 4 1918      Maubeuge to Marpent      I had intended going down to the town this morning but as the weather was misty and unpleasant I didn't. There's a very decent class of people about here. Quite above the ordinary paysan we have been used to recently. Moreover some jolly pretty girls here and there, but that by the way! Must needs be so to our regret. As we came through yesterday people thronged out and greeted us enthusiastically. We seem to be getting into civilisation once more. Believe we came through Maubeuge yesterday in mistake. Nevertheless was pleased to see the place. Started off today at 1 p.m. Weather misty and muggy. Very hot marching. Passed through Regquignies, where many houses gutted by fire apparently in 1914. Arrived at Marpent about 4 p.m. Poor billet. This morning went down to Jeumont, which adjoins.

Thursday Dec 5              Marpent to Lobbes      In Marpent, which is very close to Belgian border, many houses have been burnt out, merely brick walls left. Hun spite in 1914 I suppose. In the station yard at Regquignies yesterday noticed many abandoned rolling stock. Hun left behind many railway waggons etc at Marpent, most of them, tho' being empty and rendered useless. Believe he ran trains of munitions in and set fire to them. People say there were some great explosions, which caused some damage to adjacent buildings. We got on the road again at 10 a.m. Roads very slushy. Passed thro' Jeumont, then across the frontier into Belgium and into village of Erquelinnes, where Belgian flag took place of French. One thing that struck me was that shops had more to offer than those in France. Valley of Sambre very pretty. Reached Lobbes about 4 p.m.

Friday Dec 6                Lobbes      Had a spell today. We (6 of us) are billeted in the back of an estam. People of the cafe make a great fuss of us. Brought piano from their other house, also a stove in which they put a fire, and endeavoured to entertain us in the evening. Georgette sang, played the piano and the violin. It was extremely decent and hospitable of the little girl, but oh, really, 'twas hard to endure. However, we greatly appreciated the very kindly intentions. There are electric trains here which run out to Fontaine, about 10 kilos, then also one can, with a change, get into Charleroi. Seems as if one had come out of a desert into civilisation. Quite city-like. Went for short ride in afternoon, then had look at the numerous guns which the Hun had abandoned on the truck in the station yard.

Saturday Dec 7 1918      Lobbes to Charleroi      Were up early this morning before 5 a.m. and started on the road about 7 a.m. During practically the whole distance we marched along a road with houses on either side. Houses scrupulously clean and well ordered. Cleanliness is one of these people's virtues. Striking

main road at Anderlues, turned towards Charleroi. Passed coal mines, great heaps of slag, etc. Sun shone brilliantly. The day was like one of summer. Pretty country despite coal mines. Arrived at Dampremy, a suburb of Charleroi, about 12.30 p.m. Excellent billets. All sigs have beds. Had a look around Charleroi this afternoon. Very fine city. Electric trams and light. This evening was in next door and spent very pleasant time. Some nice girls (Valentine Bastin and soeurs) came round to entertain us (Berry and me). Handed in overcoat, entrenching tools and steel helmets this evening.



Sunday Dec 8            Dampremy to Tamines    Was very sorry to have to leave this morning. These people make a great fuss of us. Can't do enough. Insist upon feeding a chap, though they are rationed themselves. They are absolutely splendid and make one at home at once. They have suffered much at the hands of the Hun during the past four years and welcome us as deliverers. Streets were lined as we came thro' the town today. Great enthusiasm. When we halted for lunch in a village, people took us in, and there was much wine, cognac, etc baksheesh! Reached Tamines about three, looked around and managed to get a bed for the night. Like home! In 1914 this place was scene of a fearful massacre. Hun collected men in the Place near the Sambre, turned machine guns and rifles on them, killing 360 and wounding 85, set fire to many houses and threw bodies into blaze and also into river. Many people described this murder to us.

Monday Dec 9            Tamines to Spy    Last night the people of the town gave a ball in honour of our boys. Went round and had a look on. On returning saw wooden monument marking scene of massacre. Saw also graves of victims round the church. Left at about 9 a.m. for Spy. Passed coal mines. I might mention that yesterday also, on the way from Charleroi, we passed many mines. Arrived at Spy a little before midday. Had a look round with Hall and we arranged to stay with some people who had a couple of space mattresses. These people made us very welcome. The husband and wife are both school teachers and they do everything they can to make us comfortable and at home. Believe the people of the town gave a ball tonight for the boys. Stayed in and spent pleasant evening with our host and hostess.

Tuesday Dec 10 1918    Spy    Had a spell today. We march 3 days then rest one. This afternoon caught 2.30 p.m. train into Namur, where I arrived about 3.20 p.m. It's a very fine place, but on account of having time limited, was able only to have a hurried look around. Like all the other towns I have seen recently, it was profusely flagged and draped with colours of Belgium and other allies. It possesses electric light and trams, some very excellent shops, etc. Everything of course is very dear. Our friends with whom we stay told us men's boots cost 250 francs, ladies 200 fr, infants 100 fr! Everything else relatively expensive. Returned to Spy about 7 p.m. Train very crowded. In Namur had a meal of beef steak and vegs, price 6.50. Weather borderline.

Wednesday Dec 11        Spy to Villers-les-Heest    Felt pretty indisposed today (diarrhoea) and got excused march. The boys left at 7.30 a.m. but I waited to catch the train at 11 a.m. M'sieur and M'dme Froschisse, my hospitable host and hostess, came back from their schools at 10 a.m. to bid me goodbye. These people could not have done more than they have for us. They are most kind and hospitable. From the station caught a lorry into Namur and from the latter place hoped to catch a lorry out to Villers-les-Heest, a village about 9 kilos north of Namur. However, had to walk. An old chap in Namur very kindly went out of his way to put me on the right road. Told me of his imprisonment by Hun. Got 20 days' for not having handed over coffee pan when copper and brass was requisitioned. People have had a rotten time, little food, etc. Arrived Villers-les-Heest 2 p.m.

Thursday Dec 12        Villers-les-Hees to Petit Waret Lendenne    The Hun was strong on punishing these people strongly for any offence (?) The men of the house I stayed at both at

Dampremy and at Tamines had been imprisoned at Cassel in German for about 6 months for refusing to work on Hun munitions. Civilians were punished by fine or imprisonment upon the slightest pretext. Left Viller-les-Heest at 9.30 a.m. and reached Petit Waret shortly after midday. On the way we passed three huge zeppelin hangars, now of course, and as I believe they have been for a considerable time, zep-less! Bombing planes have been housed there instead. Saw numerous Hun planes which had been left behind according to terms of armistice. Fairly heavy rain fell today. Roads were slushy and the going not pleasant.

Friday Dec 13            Petit Waret to Antheit    The night before last received a very welcome little parcel from L.C. Waikomiti. A pair of sox and some chocolate. Petit Waret is only a small village. No exciting experiences there. Left at about 8.30 a.m.. Weather still unfavourable and rainy. Shortly after 12.30 p.m. reached our destination for the day Antheit, a little place about a couple of kilos from Huy and close to the Meuse. Understand we stay here for three days, though I don't think the rumour to effect that we will entrain from here will come to anything. Personally I'm getting rather fed up with this strolling across Belgium. The crowd is the same. Originally we were to entrain at Charleroi, but we're now long way past that place with little prospect of a ride.

Saturday Dec 14            Antheit    Other than a rifle inspection this morning there was nothing doing for the troops. Our billet in an upstairs room quiet and clean. Went along to a farm last evening and got some straw to sleep upon. Consequently am comfortable enough. The civie tenant of the house is a tailor by trade but don't think he has had much work during the war. Food etc is very dear and they live very frugally. Meat - beef costs 12 frs per kilo, pork 18 fr kilo, butter 40 fr kilo, cheese 8 fr kilo, while before the armistice foodstuffs were even much dearer (meat, 20 fr kilo). Eggs cost 1.25 fr each, flour (coarse at that) cost during this year 15 fr per kilo, though it can now be bought for about 2 francs per kilo.

Sunday Dec 15            Antheit    Have been afflicted with slight deafness, chiefly in my left ear, during the last day or so. Paraded sick yesterday morning and the doc said it was caused thro wax. Hope he is correct, that it is not more serious. Went into Huy yesterday afternoon. It's a very pretty little town, about the prettiest I've seen in Belgium or France, and is on the River Meuse. Has or had a population of about 14,000. It has a fine old fort, in which I understand the Hun kept prisoners of war, English, French, Italians and Russians. Hun left the place very dirty, and women and girls were busy cleaning up. Saw some Russians still about town. Their government evidently has not made arrangements for their repatriation. Town was very gaily beflagged. Had a look at the interior of the very beautiful old church. Employed myself scribbling this afternoon.

Monday Dec 16            Antheit    Received clean change of underclothing today. First since Beauvoir and, of course, very welcome. Despatched packet of p.c's this morning. This afternoon went into Huy with Ted and Oscar. Revisited fort and church. On the present site a church was first erected in 2nd Century. Beautiful architecture. The main traffic bridge over the

Meuse was blown up by Belgians in 1914, but has since been repaired (temporarily) by the Huns. Some "baksheesh" parcels came to hand this afternoon. They contained milk, tobacco, jam,, potted meat, sweets, etc. Strange to say mine contained a note from a Miss Thompson, S'fd, the second I have received from this lady, from the old town too. Though I regret I had "not the pleasure" there. We leave here early in morning. Oscar and I go on ahead on billeting. Dib went away on Paris leave yesterday.

Tuesday Dec 17      Antheit to Beaufays      Bade farewell to people of the house, who made a great fuss of me, joined billeting party and at 7 a.m. set off. Marched to station of Statte where we waited a while. Biss then decided to try for a lorry to Kiege, so we went into Huy. Didn't get one so finally we left by train about 9 a.m. arriving at Liege 10.45 a.m. Noticed coal mines and big factories on the way. Didn't see much of the town for we caught a train from near station and travelled out past Embourg (?). Our destination for the day was Beaufays. Got crowded off train which took main party but met a man who was also going out there, so were "set." Had about 5 kilos to walk after getting off train. Country was hilly and pretty. Arrived Beaufays about 1.30 and spent the remaining afternoon selecting billets for the boys. They are not altogether plentiful. Still think we may get 'em fixed OK tomorrow.

Wednesday Dec 18      Beaufays      Omitted to mention that yesterday morning at the railway station saw about 200 Russian soldiers, recently prisoners of war, about to start homeward. Had a long chat with the old man of the house last night. Told me that during the last year or so food had been so short that people were driven to journey to Luxembourg and the Ardennes in search of potatoes. People had to live principally on beetroot and swedes, etc, and while they thus existed, the Hun fed his horses on potatoes. Mine Host spoke bitterly of the miserliness of the money-grabbing profiteering farmers who sold butter at 40

fr per kilo and skim milk at [amount not entered] per litre.      Battalion arrived here about 12.30 p.m. Boys speak of splendid reception and treatment at Jemeppe where they spent last night. Intended going into Liege this afternoon but weather was too boisterous. Rain and wind. We march to Verviers tomorrow and I hear entrain further on on 21st.

Thursday Dec 19 1918      Beaufays to Verviers      There was a wedding in the village yesterday and what with this and the arrival of the NZers there was quite a lot of excitement amongst the villagers. Started off at 8 this morning. Weather was threatening but beyond half a minute's hail was excellent for marching. Country was very beautiful. Wonderful hills and mountains. Had an hour's halt for lunch and reached Verviers about 3 p.m. Town was very profusely beflagged and we received a very enthusiastic welcome. Have very decent billet. Very nice people who cannot do (in their opinion) enough for men. One son is a Belgian soldier home on leave. Another is a teacher and the third is at college at Liege. Soldier son has been to Scotland on leave on 2 occasions and speaks English. Ted and I went to the pictures this evening.

Friday Dec 20           Verviers to Herbesthal    We are resting here today until 8 p.m. when set out to march to a place about 8 miles distant, there to entrain for Cologne. It is raining now 6.30 p.m. and I am not keen on the prospect. This is a very fine town of about 52,000 inhabitants. Chief industry, making of woollen textiles. In this believe there were 30,000 employed before the war. Electric trains, electric light and gas. Some very fine buildings. Shops with plenty of goods, which by the way are very dear. Went down town this afternoon to buy p.c's but most had been sold. Very fine bazaar surpassing most I have seen in NZ. Overcoats were re-issued today. Later. Left 8 p.m. with not a few regrets. Enthusiastic send-off.

Saturday Dec 21         Herbesthal to Langenfeld    Last evening we marched through fairly hilly country but it was too dark to see much of it. Passed through Limbourg where early in war Hun had burned numerous houses. Weather was fortunately fine. Crossed frontier at 11.25 p.m., reached Herbesthal about 15 minutes later and were entrained by midnight. YMCA provided tea, biscuits, chocolate. Herbesthal is a huge station with many sidings, platforms, etc, provided specially for rapid entrainment etc of troops. Train left 1 a.m. First Hun I saw was a signalman. Slept part of way. Reached Cologne about 6 a.m. Detrained 7 a.m. and started march 8 a.m. Went through town, tho' not through main street. March was without incident. No apparent hostile sentiment. Some looked a bit sour, but often we got smiles and hand waves. Very beautiful city. Splendid modern architecture. Long march. Rather tired at end. Billeted in a hall.

Sunday Dec 22 1918     Langenfeld        The day has been very fine. Perfect for this time of the year. Am not altogether pleased with our billet here. It is barn-like and in spite of the big heater which the civilian who runs the Riverhaus next door fires assiduously, is cold and far from cosy. There are plenty of houses about here where we could get billeted in, and we are trying to effect a change. Last night the Fritz next door was very attentive to our comfort. Gave us straw, etc. Today we were issued with palliasses, pillow cases and paper sheets. Nothing particular doing, except pay tonight. Drew 100 marks, equal to 2 13s 4d. People seem quite decent, even friendly. Orders forbid fraternisation; have had crowds of kids and youths in our billet, but have had to chase 'em out. Yesterday as we came thro' Cologne, saw the "Guards" there.

Monday Dec 23           Langenfeld        Last evening there was a slight fall of snow, which disappeared before morning. Signals have taken over telephone communications. After tomorrow I understand civilians will not be allowed to use telephones. A couple of our chaps were installed in the local telephone bureau this morning. Was down there this evening to have a look round. There were several girls still working in the exchange but expect they will have to find something else to do in a day or so. A party went into Cologne today to try to purchase few extras for Xmas but met with little success. Foodstuffs are very scarce, poor and dear. Parenga says the only flag he saw flying was the Union Jack over army hdqrs near cathedral.

Tuesday Dec 24         Langenfeld        It's Christmas Eve in [word indecipherable] German [word indecipherable]. Our neighbours have brought in a little Xmas tree and three or four frauleins

have been busily decorating with little fancy shimmering things. These Germans are very strong on celebrating the occasion in the good old way. They have also brought in plates for tomorrow's dinner. Received another lot of gift parcels today and these fortunately contained a pudding in each, so tomorrow we'll have a piece of the Xmas duff after. The other extras arranged for don't appear to have arrived but I believe we are to have a big dinner later, perhaps at New Year. YMCA canteen opened today. I spent most of afternoon waiting in queues, but got cigarettes, chocolate, etc. Received tonight a cable re money, a book from M.W., a card and some choco' from Davis girls and a letter from Kilby. Band went out carolling this evening.

Wednesday Dec 25 1918 Langenfeld Well Xmas Day has passed more cheerfully and brighter than a day or so ago I anticipated. The day has been extraordinarily fine for the season. In the morning there was a church which somehow or other I missed and then at 1 p.m. we had dinner and really it was quite a decent turn-out. We had tables cloth-covered down the centre of our big hall and crockery which the Huns of next door brought in. Requisitioned, I believe. Diner consisted of soup, roast beef, potatoes, cabbage, plum pudding out of gift parcels, and I also had some Scotch cake which Berry received in a parcel. Then for

those who wished it there was beer. Quite a good spread indeed in spite of fact that supplies intended had not arrived. In evening had a bit of dancing for which band played. Several frauleins from next door pushed themselves in. To pay [?word indecipherable] wives.

Thursday Dec 26 Langenfeld Yes, this is a topsy turvy old world. So I thought last night as I watched some of our fellows dancing with these German girls. The situation seemed absurd - ludicrous! Fighting their kin bitterly for over four years which have just gone, and then, and now to dance with them: makes one think. Personally, my memory is not so short. Went down to Wiesdorf this afternoon to field cashier. Sent cable for money. Returned about 5 p.m. The Germans about here, in fact all that I have seen, are well dressed, appear far from starved, though I believe they have been pretty hard pressed for tuck, and don't seem to worry a jot about the past, the present or the future. Slight sprinkling of snow today.

Friday Dec 27 Langenfeld On several occasions during the last few days there has been several attempts to snow Today has been very cold. Had the hampers brought round from the transport lines and this morning made a start to overhaul and clean phones etc. A start has been made with demobilisation and yesterday 29 old hands went away. Bill Berry was one of them. It is understood that a further draft will be sent away in a few weeks. This should include all of the 8th. This part is well provided for in respect of public transport. Trams and trains run from here to Cologne and also to Dusseldorf. 50% leave is granted daily to Cologne which means that a fellow can go in when he likes.

Saturday Dec 28 1918 Langenfeld Got a pass today, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., for Cologne. Caught a train which left the station at 9.19 a.m. and arrived in the city about 10 a.m. Got out at the Cologne-Deutz Station which is on the east bank of the river and then went across the big bridge. Had a look through the magnificent cathedral. Evidently most of its interior decorations etc have been removed to a place of greater safety. A great many of the best windows have been taken out, though many beautiful ones still are in position. The city possesses some excellent buildings and shops, seemingly well stocked. Had dinner for 5 marks. Some sort of meat, potatoes, sauerkraut to which I wasn't "friendly," sweets and a cup of tea. Weather was very unfavourable so we returned early, leaving station about 3 p.m.

Sunday Dec 29 Langenfeld Yesterday afternoon we (Caseley, Bargh, Hogan, Askew and myself, besides a number of other battalion chaps) got on a train which we understood would stop at Langenfeld. However, it didn't and we were over-carried a few miles. Took the tram back, but it must have run in a most indirect route for it was well after 6 when we landed home. Went to church parade at 9.30 a.m. in the YMCA hall. A number of hdqrs fellows who failed to put in an appearance will, I hear, interview O/C Coy tomorrow. Endeavoured to do a little

scribbling this afternoon but the mood was not with me. Wrote to K.W. and A.M.C. Turkeys and a lot of other tuck intended for Xmas came to hand today, and will be used for New Year spread.

Monday Dec 30 Langenfeld The day has been overcast but mild. Hear that all remaining 1914-1915 men are likely to get away at any time. It is believed that they will go to U.K. first, which is rather good. I hope that the cash I have cabled for arrived in time, otherwise I will be rather awkwardly placed. If I thought it would not, I might ask to go with a later draft, but then it is possible that subsequent drafts will leave from France or Antwerp. So the chances are - a holiday without or with little cash, or no holiday at all! Bonn, the great university town, is now in bounds to NZ troops. I hope to see it in a day or so.

Tuesday Dec 31 1918 Langenfeld The last day of the old year. How these years seem to glide round! Found a little distraction in overhauling the phones which, considering the hampers they are packed in and the weather experienced during the recent trek, are in excellent condition. New Year's Eve was celebrated quietly enough, tho' I think some got quite a lot of fun out of it. The band supplied music for a little dance and quite a number of frauleins found

their way in and apparently greatly enjoyed dancing with some of the boys. I thought as I watched them, that people in England and at home would not believe their eyes if by some magic they were whisked into the hall. One could scarcely believe that not 2 months ago we were at war with these people.