

Bert Henson Diary (No 3)

NOTE:- This diary is for the years 1917 and 1918. It is written in pencil in a loose-leaf notebook, with dates written in. The pages have become separated from their clipping binder and some are missing. In a few, the writing is smudged beyond legibility. Some of the pages have become misplaced. I have endeavoured to replace them in the correct order, but might not always have been successful. The "diary" also contains jottings of addresses and other notes to himself. I have transcribed only those which I think could add to our knowledge of one man's experience in the Great War and its affect on his life and philosophy. -DGM

For Honour and For Her

Somewhere a woman, thrusting fear away, Faces the future bravely for your sake;
Toils on from dawn to dark, from day to day Fights back her tears nor heeds the bitter ache.
She loves you, trusts you, Breathes in prayers your name. Soil not her faith in you
By sin or shame.

Somewhere a woman - mother, sweetheart, wife - Waits, betwixt hopes and fears for
your return. Her kiss, her words will cheer you in the strife; When death itself
confronts you grim and stern. But let her image all your reverence claim When base
temptations scorch you with their flame.

Somewhere a woman watches, thrilled with pride; Shrined in her heart you share a
place with none. She toils, she waits, she prays, till side by side You stand together
when the battle's done. O keep for her dear sake a stainless name Bring back to her a
manhood free from shame.

-from the Navuan Nautilus

London Saturday [January] 20 [1917]. Morning shopping etc. Got camera from Kodaks. No films procurable there. Afternoon 2.30 p.m. matinee "The Boy." Rain in afternoon. Caught train Kings Cross for Edinboro.

Sunday 21st. Arrived Edinboro 8 a.m. Raining. Ramsay Lodge. In time for breakfast. Church. Look around city which is really fine. Dinner at Overseas Club in Prince's St. Afternoon Royal Scottish Museum, Princess Garden. Tea. Walk avec N.W. and Bill. Returned to Giles House and to bunk. Monday [January] 22nd 1917 Royal Mile, Council Chambers, law courts, Parliament, Cathedral and another chapel. Heart of the Midlothian Marcot (?) Square. White Horse Close, John Knox's house. Holyrood Palace. Afternoon bus to Forth Bridge. Raining. Met N.W. Salisbury Crags and outskirts of city. Bed about 11.30 p.m.

Tuesday 23rd 1917 Castle 10 a.m. Dinner in Princes St, Overseas Club. Got luggage from Ramsay Lodge. Waited for Bill there while he waited for me in Princes St. Princes St gardens. Caught by skin of our teeth (Bill's and mine) train for Oban at 4.48. Misty and raining but saw numerous lochs on way including Loch Awe. Arrived Oban 9.50 p.m. Marine Hotel. Supper. Bed, tres jolie.

Wed 24th. Morning. Walk down sea front to near Ganavan. Afternoon cruise round Lismore, returning about 6 p.m. Weather during cruise fine excepting slight shower. Met Misses Reid. Evening walk round to Kerrera Ferry and over hills back to town about 11.15 p.m.

Thursday 25 10 a.m. cruise to Loch Spelve. Weather not very favourable. Overcast, wet. Shepherds Hat [name of an island], Croggan. Returned about 2.30 p.m. Walk with Addison [?name].

Friday morning Arrive Callander. Coach to Trossachs. Boat up Loch Katrine. Drive across to Loch Lomond. Steamer down Loch Lomond to Balloch. Balloch to Glasgow.

Saturday. Pitlochry. Train from P to Killiecrankie. Walk down Pass of K.

Sunday. Rouken Glen. Clyde steamer 10.40 a.m. Bridge Wharf. Lord of the Isles [name of steamship] Wed 24th Oban Thurs 25 Oban Fri 26 Oban Sat 27 Oban Sun 28 Oban to Glasgow Mon 29 Glasgow Tues 30 Glasgow (Wallace) Wed 31 killy Thurs 1st London. Afternoon Killy. Fri 2

[next page starts]... out road towards Dunstaffnage Castle. Rain came over. Turned back. Met the Gordons. Dinner at Marine. Went for walk with Gordons and other girls out towards Kerrera Ferry, returning via pulpit hill.

Friday 26 [January 1917]. 10 a.m. Met Gordons and went with them in a launch over to Gylen Castle on Kerrera. A beautiful day. Numerous snapshots at castle - one of Hyland [?] Castle. Returned to Oban about 2.30 p.m. Went down in car with Gordons to Ganavan Sands. Bathing. Returned about 6 p.m. Bought souvenirs. Dinner. Met Gordons about 10 p.m. and went walk out towards Ganavan. Met Miss Tait with Gordons. Good byeeee. Returned about midnight.

Sat 27. Up at 4.15 a.m. Breakfast. Caught train at 5.50 a.m. and travelled down to Callander. Met two very nice girls who gave us each a lucky stone (from Tyree). Morning fine, scenery magnificent. Arrived Callander about 8.30 a.m. Breakfast Ancaster Arms. Coach dep for Trossachs Hotel 11.25 a.m. arr Trossachs Hotel 1.5 p.m. Lunch. Coach on to Trossachs from about 1.30 p.m. arrived T. pier 2.15 p.m. Steamer across Loch Katrine arr Stronachlachar 3 p.m. Coach to Inversnaid arr 4.10 p.m. Afternoon tea. Steamer dep 4.10 p.m. across Loch Lomond to Balloch. Met Miss Crawford, David's [?name] friend. Arr Balloch pier 7.5 p.m. Train dep for Glasgow 7.30 p.m. Arr Glasgow Central 8.27 p.m. Went with Miss Crawford and NZ nurses to George Hotel and then returned to Club. Tea. No beds. Went YMCA and finally to Bath Hotel where we stayed for night.

Sunday 28th. Up about 10.30 a.m. After dinner met Misses Reid. Train [or tram] to Rouken Glen, a very beautiful park, after which we went to "Broomfield," the Reid's house. Tea. Snapshots. Walk. Caught 10.15 p.m. train back to town. Grand Hotel to which we had shifted.

Note: There follows 11 pages of notes, notations and names including:

Bn Sig. Section & Sigs attached

Cpl Dibble	Wounded 29/9/18; home 1/10/18	L Cpl Henson	"
Berry	" Bullick Killed 29/9/18	Pte Taylor	Askew
Cammell	Killed 2/10/18	Clark Wounded 2/10/18	Downie
O'Dea	Wounded 1/10/18	Butler Wounded	
2/10/18	Morrison	Willcocks Coy	Williamson Wounded
1/10/18	Westray Wounded 29/9/18	Dicks Coy	
Lt Benton	Wounded 1/10/18		

Wednesday January 24th [1917] London - Boulogne Last night, to raise my spirits, rather gloomy at the prospect of the end of my furlough and the bidding farewell to old England on the morrow, I went and saw "Theodore and Coy" at the Gaiety. Leslie Henson, the leading man, was splendid. The same can be said for others but somehow or other I wasn't in the humour to appreciate the play fully. It must have been after midnight when I got to bed this morning and as I was wakened again about 4 a.m. I didn't get very much sleep. However, hopped out and after wash, breakfast etc, got my pack up and in company with rest of chaps who had been staying at the Soldiers' Club bade farwell to that much appreciated institution. and "tubed" from Russell Square to Victoria Station (change Leicester Square and Charing Cross). At the station there was a huge crowd of soldiers. They were soon aboard the several waiting trains. The train on which I got left about 7 a.m. There were not so many smiling faces. Most were pretty sick at heart at having to leave again. The run down to Folkstone occupied a little over two hours. Arrived there a little after 9. There was a bitterly cold wind blowing. We got aboard about 9 a.m. and were soon off. Our boat cruised around a bit waiting for the other. Then when that came out she turned her nose Boulognewards. It was with a slight feeling of regret that I watched the cliffs of folkstone with their tall prominent houses gradually fade from view. It was farewell to old England and the good times which I had left behind. I didn't feel too cheerful. We were escorted across by several destroyers. Boulogne was reached a little after noon. On the trip across the sea was a bit choppy and once or twice I felt rather "squeamish." However I managed to keep things down. Upon disembarking I made my way along the wharf. Picked up Glasgow. Outside the entrance to wharf the crowd was formed up and marched up to a camp on the hill about a mile out. Here we were accommodated in large huts. Had something to eat then a look around the camp. There was a good deal of snow on the ground and the wind was biting cold. In the camp there was a big wireless station. Visited the YMCA and canteen and also the Q.M. to see if I could get leave for town. Didn't succeed in getting latter but received tip that train for Steenwerck way did not leave till 10 p.m. the following night - also the valuable... [the account is broken at this point as the next page is missing].

[Undated] ...with me usually, and it was most fortunate that there was no one in it at the time. About 11 o'clock all except Bagley and I - who remained behind to look after the office etc - went out of the village to a position up the road some distance where things were not quite so warm. The line in the office (the "Grapolett Estam") was extended to the cellar and the phone

taken down there. The estam was used as a dressing station for the wounded who came up. I began to realise that there was a war on.

I learnt that Fritz had attacked on the sector we had come out of last night, besides that on the right and left of it, but was being held and moreover severely punished. One of our lines became ...[here the diary entry continues on the next page, which has the shoulder heading "Courcelles"].. cut and while I was out down the street mending I witnessed rather a rotten affair. A motor ambulance was coming round a bit of a corner when a shell landed practically under it. It came on out of control and came to a standstill against a bank. I could see that both the driver and the medical orderly who had been sitting alongside him on the front were badly hit. Ran up and took hold of the orderly who had got out and was appealing for help and led him along to the dressing station. The poor driver was finished. He had been killed instantaneously. He was horribly mutilated, his head being practically blown off. As I write this in the... [next page missing]

Sunday Jan 28th 1917 Fleurbaix Early this morning some time between 3-4 a.m. we, in our billet, were awakened from our slumbers by the explosion of a number of shells just a little way down the road. For a while didn't feel altogether comfortable. Listened fairly attentively to the report of the gun, followed closely by the screech of the shell and then the bursting of the shell as it landed. Altogether Fritz must have sent over about 30 shells - 5.9's I think. Most of them fell down near Taranaki billets. Believe several fellows were wounded. Fragments landed about our "show" and on the roof but nobody (in Sig Section) got out of bunk. Fritz desisted after a while and we "carried on" with the sleeping. This little demonstration was probably the work of a travelling battery, perhaps an armoured train. But this wasn't the end of the "frightfulness." At 10 a.m. attended church parade in YMCA room. There were not many there, most of the Coy men being on fatigue. Service had just commenced when suddenly we heard the howl of a shell followed by its explosion in uncomfortable proximity to our building. I expected to see the wall come it, but it didn't. Some of the chaps actually saw the flash. Debris etc clattered on the tile roof and against the wall. A number of others followed this one and landed around. The service was however continued. This afternoon I got a pass and walked into Sailyly to see Bert. When I arrived there a little after 2 p.m. found that he had gone into Estaires, but when I called again at his billet about 5 p.m. he had arrived back. Related to him my recent visit to England. He is looking forward eagerly to his leave. He went on picquet at 6 p.m. so I started back then. Had tea Bac St Maur and also called in Q.M's store. Arrived billet about 8 p.m. Night was fine but cold.

...Next two pages smudged and illegible...

Tues Jan 30th 1917 Fleurbaix [starts] ...my feet all the time! Performed some amazing acrobatic feats. Kept one nice and warm. Snow is falling again this evening. See by yesterday's "Times" that skating is being indulged in, in Holland and Denmark. This morning Sgt Gordon went up to look at lines to which we will be going in a day or so.

Wed Jan 31st I am extremely sore and stiff in limb - the result of my antics on the ice. This afternoon was so stiff that I found a walk up to Q.M's Store very hard work. But even after this I was sliding from one end of the pond to the other, upon my return. It's fine fun. I'm getting more expert now. Went to bunk early tonight. We go up to trenches in the morning. Today has been

fine with sunshine but a very keen air. Our planes have been busy.

February 1st 1917 (Billet) Fleurbaix to Trenches Was on duty again this morning 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. after which I packed up, helped to clean up billet and then set out for trenches a little after 10.30 a.m. A tramp of about a couple of miles brought me to Btn Hdqrs (HO43) on which station I am to be this time. Am accommodated in a dug-out, or "built-up," together with 6 or 7 of the other boys. A little after 2 p.m. went with Ted Arnold and Oscar J. to try to run our box of phones to earth. My main concern was my blankets which were in the box. (packing for phones). Found out that box had been left at Dead Dog Dump. I didn't have time to go down there so left it to Ted. The box eventually turned up here about 4 p.m. Our police brought it up. I was very pleased to get my blankets, for the night promised to be very cold.

Feb'y 2nd, 3rd & 4th Trenches Fleurbaix Foremost in my mind concerning the last three days comes the fact that it has been decidedly cold. In our bivvy we have bunks (wire netting stretched across a framework) and on these 2 blankets and one's greatcoat etc isn't quite sufficient to keep one comfortably cosy at night. We have a brazier and hunt around for fuel but cannot keep it going all night. In the Signals Office also, haven't experienced anything approaching a heatwave. There are 6 of us on the phones, so working three hour shifts brings one on duty every 18 hours (15 off, 3 on) and three hours is quite long enough to sit and freeze. The tucker hasn't been too plentiful last few days. Not "over-much" meat and bread. However have been able to supplement the larder a bit with stuff purchased in Fleurbaix. On the night of the 2nd one of the battalions carried out a raid on old Fritz and secured several prisoners. Believe it was quite successful. Information is meagre though. Last night (3rd) Fritz put over gas a little way along the line. Also tossed a number of gas shells back into Fleurbaix. Heard that a number of Taranaki (1st) chaps got caught with it. Fritz hasn't been allowed too quiet a time lately; while he, too, seems to be livening up a little. The snow remains on the ground. All water in pools, drains etc is frozen over and we indulge in a bit of sliding. Warms one. I am getting quite proficient on the ice now although our slides here are not very long. I have a good deal of letter writing to do but it is so cold one doesn't feel much like sitting down and freezing for a few hours.

Feb'y 6th 1917 Trenches (HO43) Fleurbaix The Huns have been putting more shells back Fleurbaix way. Tonight it was anticipated that Fritz would raid or attempt to. During the day he put over into his own and our wire 16 minnies. However nothing came of it. Last night I received a couple of letters from Nellie. She is a most consistent scribe. I appreciate it. Tomorrow Dave H. and L. Williamson go on leave to "Blighty." They are naturally rather expectant. Have administered some advice.

Feb'y 18th Trenches HO42 I'm afraid I have rather neglected my notes lately. I'll just go back and summarize briefly. I remained at HO44 until Feb'y [gap left for date but overlooked]. During this time very clear bright days were enjoyed. The air was very keen, the sun being too weak to make much difference. Our planes took good advantage of the fine weather conditions. On the morning of [day or date not mentioned] our battalion was relieved by 1st Wellingtons and went back to billets in Fleurbaix. Jack Miles, Norman Tingey, Jack Facer and myself were appointed to run HI13 at QM's Store near Bac-St Maur. I left on my own a little after 10 a.m., walked down the tramline to the road. Here I found a motor lorry. Upon enquiring the driver informed me that

it would shortly return to Bac St Maur. He was willing to give me a ride. I promptly swung my pack and self aboard. Instead of going straight back to Bac St Maur it was found that some old light tram rails had to be picked up from one or two different dumps. Result was I had a little tour down to Dead Dog and V.C. dumps and then right away round behind Fleurbaix to B St M. Got set down near railway and returned to HI13 arriving there about 12.30 p.m. Jack Miles and N. Tingey who had walked were already there. The phone here is in the Q.M's Store. A brazier fitted with a stove pipe chimney keeps the place nice and warm. There is any amount of fuel, coal and coke supplied. A couple of bunks are in this store-room. Jack Miles and Facer occupied these while N.E.T. and I bunked in together round at a "room" at the back. We all had a very easy time here. Worked 6 hours in day-time, 3 at night. Bac St Maur was only about 10 minutes walk distant, while the YMCA and Exped Force canteen were also near. Very convenient. Altogether it was a very desirable little post. On Sunday Mr Arkwright obliged me with a pass to Estaires. I left about noon and walked into Saily to Bert's billet, found that he had gone out earlier in the morning, my informant presumed to Estaires. I decided to go on there on the chance of finding him. Soon got there but it was not until a good while later that I found him, or at least he found me. It appears that he had not gone to Estaires in the morning. On returning to lunch he learnt that I had called and gone on. He thereupon followed me up. I was in the YMCA rooms and had almost given up hope of finding him in there when he "floated" in. Together we had a stroll around the town. There is not a great deal to be seen, especially in war-time. In pre-war days the place boasted of a steam tram service. Almost needless to say it isn't running now. Down at the river side we saw a number of Hun prisoners engaged in unloading some coal-laden barges.

Feb'y 24th Nieppe Had today free to wander around and I endeavoured to see all there was to see. The place is very dead and to us miserable. It is knocked about a bit by Hun shell fire in places, especially in the vicinity of the church. The once fine old church is now in a very battered condition. Was very surprised to find that it was being used as a stable for some of our horses.

[NOTE: Diary entries cease until 11 November 1917]

11.11.17 Left Btn a little after 2 p.m. reached Rft camp 3.45 p.m. (at Rottingham [?name] Station). Surprised and pleased we were to catch 6.30 p.m. train which however was delayed until nearly 8 p.m. Then had long delays at several stations on way. Result missed express leaving Boulogne at 9 p.m. Got into Boulogne about 11 p.m. Had tuck at the splendid Soldiers Canteen or buffet. Caught train for Paris 1.6 a.m. 12th.

Monday 12.11.17 Travelled down first class from Boulogne. Comfortable and got in a bit of sleep. Didn't see much on journey. Amiens about 6.30 a.m. Arrived at Paris about 11.30 a.m. and proceeded to Hotel "Moderne." Had quite a lot of fun on way. People were eager to help or direct us. Stopped on one occasion to make enquiry. In about half a minute had a crowd around. Got there alright and booked at British Army and Navy Leave Club which occupies part of Hotel Moderne. Very decent place. Dinner, bath, change etc, after which felt much better. Met a French soldier who spoke English. He showed Norman, Bill Hannan and I around a bit from about 4 to 6 p.m. when he had to go to his home. Very nice fellow. We reported at Barracks near St Lazare Station. Had tea then later went to Olympic vaudeville. In there met an American lieutenant - a doctor. Norman and Bill found other pleasure after half time and a couple of

fascinating maidens (?) took their places. Had to resist very strong and subtle advances (flank attack). Was successful but it wasn't easiest thing to do. Took tube. Opera - Republique. Must be now nearly midnight. Tingey is not yet home. Police came up to see about light shining out onto street. There's a lot of paint and powder in this city. An unpainted English girl is a refreshing sight.

13.11.17 Tuesday Got up rather late and missed excursion.

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1918 Boeschefe

The New Year has arrived! From it, in it, we hope for great things. We hope for success to our cause, we hope for peace. Great events will undoubtedly happen before the curtain falls upon it, but it is useless for one to forecast here even if he would. However, let us commence this round full of cheer, of determination to stick and win; and moreover I'm sure this is the spirit of men. Year will undoubtedly be a year of extreme endurance not only of armies but of peoples. What will the result be? I am confident. January 1st finds this part of the country mantled inches deep in snow and heavy clouds have banished the sun. It finds me attached to the Wireless Section Y Corps Signals for a course of instruction in spark wireless. Leaving the battalion on the evening of Christmas Day (nr Belgian Chateau) I went to the R'ft camp and arrived here the following day. Have been swotting theory but anticipate going out on stations shortly. There are about a dozen chaps from all parts of the corps here on this course. Last night we had an impromptu with stuff purchased from the canteen and shops in the village and incidentally stayed up and saw the old year out and the new one in. Whiled away the time with song and story and had quite an enjoyable evening! There were present Yorkshiremen, Lancashire-men, Londoners, and lastly but not least, N.Zers. Now I have decided to keep a diary this year - that is, wherever it

is practicable. I had the same idea in mind when I hunted through the stationery depts of Peter Robinson's, Selfridges, and finally ran this little book to earth in the "Times" Book Club when I was over in England on leave almost a year ago. Decent pocket diaries were very difficult to obtain. Of course during the remainder of my time in England I was much too busy to keep a diary, but even when I got back to France I'm afraid I soon got tired of it and let it go. Rather a pity because even a rough record of events and their dates must in years to come be found to prove of great interest to at least those whom it concerns most intimately. Therefore I have decided to have another try this year and to introduce a little more perseverance or persistence. Even so I intend it to be but brief.

Friday Jan 4th 1918 Grand Crist Near Boeschefe Was on duty from 8 o'clock last night till 4 a.m. this morning, on again 2 p.m. till 8 p.m. The old spark was going well this evening. Rushed messages through to other station and fairly winded them. They soon were offering "Q." This morning Kennedy Barber and I went into Boeschefe to bring out some fuel and rations. In the end got them to bring it out on the lorry. Our fuel ran out at breakfast time and we had to renew supply before we could have dinner. Kennedy, an R.E. chap, looks after the cooking and does well. For breakfast we had bacon and fried onions and for dinner fried steak and chips (potatoes). This evening after 8 went into the farmhouse for usual cup of coffee. Our host interested us with

accounts of what and where were about this part in 1914. Says he saw a German prince who was killed at Mt des Cats. Horses were commandeered and taken away by the Huns. A great many of the young men were taken away to be made to work for the Boche. Our friend is under the impression that we are on special interception work. Regards us as of considerable importance.

January 5th Grand Crist The usual day on the "sparks." Was on duty 8 a.m. till 2 p.m. About 4 p.m. Barber and I went over to the battalion at [illegible - looks like "Hooghnaf"]. A lorry took us most of the way. I went over chiefly to see about getting some pay. Saw Ted Arnold who upon my departure lent me his water bottle (empty!). Saw Mr Lockie and arranged for him to bring money over here when he comes over on course on 7th. We returned to our barn about 8 p.m. Had the usual coffee and warm in our host's house. Received the glad news this evening that we are to close down from midnight till 9 a.m. on Monday morning.

January 6 Sunday Grand Crist Got up about 9 a.m. Breakfast porridge, bacon, fried bread, milk at 11 a.m. Then went with Bob West and Brice [?] Neville into Boeschefe for rations and fuel. The Napier tender brought us back most of the way. A little before dark went out and purchased some milk from a farm house. Got back with it and then Kennedy set to work making custards etc. He's an "A.1" cook. Anticipate a good "tuck in" tomorrow. This evening we went into the farm house again for coffee and a warm. Our show isn't too tropical. Freezing! Monsieur interested us with scraps of history of Ypres. Says the cloth hall was built by Spanish in 1600. The town then had a population of 200,000. Just before outbreak of war was about 18,000. Grandpere a genial old chap seemed very interested.

These people are very decent to us, will do almost anything to oblige. I intended doing a lot of writing this afternoon but it was so cold in our billet that I couldn't settle down to it.

January 7 1918 (Monday) Commenced "Sparking" at 9 a.m. and carried on till 2 p.m. Breakfast as follows: steak and bacon, porridge. Ken is a gem in the culinary dept. Dinner: B-beef and chipped potatoes. Tea: rice pudding, custard (delicious), cheese, bread, toast, jam etc. We're living very well indeed. After dinner Barber and I went into Boeschefe for fuel, candles etc and anything else we could "scrounge." Went to baths but could get only a change. Met Mr Lockie in the village and he gave me 40fr he had brought over "pour moi." A little to assist to keep the home fires burning. The snow has practically disappeared. Roads are very slushy and weather is considerably milder. Lloyd George's re-declaration of our war aims makes interesting and agreeable reading in yesterday's paper. And now to bunk. Am on at 2 a.m. tomorrow. Now nearly 9 p.m.

Tuesday January 8th Was on duty from 2 a.m. till 8 a.m. The cold was very severe in this draughty hop-drying loft that we occupy. Snow commenced to fall heavily early this morning and a little after breakfast time was several inches deep. I turned into bunk about 11 a.m. and got up about 6 in the evening. Went into Boeschefe to see about pay for the chaps here but don't think it will be available, or at least it's too much trouble for the Corps people to worry about. Work didn't go along so well today. Crystal trouble. The chaps are getting pretty fed up with the treatment meted out by these Corps "heads." They display indifference which is d---d annoying. It's now a little after midnight. The receiving set at the other station has "gone dis" so I'm going to turn in. Fingers and toes are tingling with the cold. Bon Soir.

Wednesday January 9th 1918 A very cold morning, but it is much warmer this evening. The snow is rapidly thawing. Went into Boeschefe this morning for fuel etc and incidentally saw Lt Robertson regarding pay. Prevailed upon him and extracted a promise that he would try to get some for the chaps. Says he won't be able to give each man more than 20frs. A measly pittance! I also enlightened him a little concerning conditions under which we toil out here. Don't know if he'll improve things. Received a letter and an Xmas card from Home, also a letter from Glenn. This morning just before I set out for Boeschefe an aeroplane was forced to descend in a field near by through engine trouble. Went over and had a look at it. Our friend in the farm house is really decent to us. Invites us to go over to the "maison" any time and warm ourselves by the fire and have coffee. Yesterday he brought up a couple of horse rugs to put on our bunks. He is always willing to do anything he can for us. He is a Belgian and we are just in Belgium here, France being just on the other side of the road which is the boundary.

Monday, January 14th 1918 Grand Crist Went in for rations in the morning. Was on duty 2 p.m. till 8 p.m. but in afternoon went into Boeschefe again to bring out the Wilson set. This morning went into the farm house and had a most interesting talk with m'sieur. He recounted to me most interesting incidents of

the early days of the war. Today I received a pair of sox and gloves from Kilby. The ground this morning was covered with snow to a depth of several inches. Arrived in "Blighty" on leave a year ago today.

Tuesday 15 January Grand Crist Rain fell last night and this morning the snow had completely gone. Had more rain this afternoon and it's still falling this evening. The temperature is considerably milder. I don't quite relish the idea of going on duty tomorrow morning 2 till 8 a.m. Barber is unwell so I suppose I'll have a lone and busy shift. Am going over to the house now for the usual coffee, then to bunk for a few hours. It might be interesting to chronicle the fact that m'sieur came rushing over here a day or so ago to inform us that M. Clemenceau had just passed in a motor car. Believe he is visiting this front.

Wednesday 16 January Grand Crist Went down to Boeschefe with Haliburton and Wilson to get rations and incidentally have a bath in afternoon. Later went with Barber into Abeele where I posted a parcel of cigarettes to Maurice Lalande.

Saturday January 19th 1918 Grand Crist The usual routine on this rather aimless job. Feel rather disgusted with the way this course is conducted. We have had about 3 days theory and nearly three weeks practical which has devolved to sending and receiving messages. Working right round the clock one has had little chance of swotting theory and consolidating elementary knowledge. Most of the chaps here are operators. All this practical work has been out of all reasonable proportion to the theory side. The last day or so the weather has been mild. Barber and I went into Abeele last evening and to a concert given by the Middlesex Party in the hall. It was an excellent show and we enjoyed it heartily. We have been working the amplifier in conjunction with the B.F. set today. Barber and I went for a walk to Mt des Cats this afternoon. Called in and saw my friends (Belgian) at the farm. These people I got to know when I was on the musketry course at Mt des Cats before Xmas. They are refugees and before the war lived at Hollebeck where they had a large farm. At different times they have recounted to me interesting

happenings in the early days of the war. They left Hollebeck in October ("Dessim." nom).

(diary No 4 continued in file "DIARIES6.DOC")