

Bert Henson Diaries (No 2)

Diary starts May 12 1916 - July 28 1916:-

Friday, May 12 Doulieu This morning Sgt Edwards and Ray Barrel left for Armentieres "en foote" as advance party for Wgtn Btn Signallers. We occupied morning buzzer practice. Noticed some Ross rifles in Q.M's Store. After dinner went out a mile or so on usual station work. Women were working in adjacent fields. One old lady was busy hoeing out weeds in a plot of young oats. Fancy weeding oats in NZ. Of course here the plots are small. This evening enjoyed the luxury of a hot bath in a tub borrowed from "madame", who is very obliging to the boys.

Saturday 13 Doulieu Rain fell during the night and continued until late in the afternoon when the sky was still overcast. Buzzer practice. At about 2 p.m. 2nd Batn L.L.O. passed en route to billets near here. Saw Jack McKain, Alex Gilmore, Stan Fanselon, Jack Roache and McKay. Like old times to see old faces. There was a little mail in tonight. Received a p.c. from Mston.

Sunday 14 Doulieu to Armentieres Weather still gloomy. Ground and roads slushy. During morning got things ready for moving out. At 6 p.m. were out on the road ready and at 7 p.m. we moved off en route to Armentieres. The roads in parts were muddy making the marching rather heavy. Darkness came on. As we passed along could see star shells going up all along lines. Reached our destination about 11 p.m. and after a little delay we of Hdqrs were billeted in the "hospice civil" which place is considerably damaged by shell and rifle fire. Armentieres seems to be a fine place. Got to bunk on floor midnight.

Monday 15 Armentieres - trenches Got up about 8 o'clock. During the night felt the floor rather hard. After breakfast had a little look around. Near and in the hospital in which have just spent the night must have been heavy fighting. Buildings smashed about by shells etc. Windows all shattered by concussion. After dinner, having left our packs at Q.M's store, Johnson, Harrison and self went out to Tissage Post (Houplines) and relieved Otago Sigs. A fine little "home." However at 6 p.m. we were relieved by West Riding Reg Sigs and then came up to trenches. Snipers busy as we came up Comm' trench. Arrived at and took over C97 which is in front line about 80 yds away from Fritz. Quite neighbourly. Am feeling brave!

Tuesday 16 May 1916 Trenches In the firing line at last 9 months after going into camp. Time flies! The weather is fine and the trenches are drying splendidly. Our "dug out" of sandbags is very small, abt 8'x 6' by 4' high. This morning I was outside talking to a chap a few yards from our "bivvy" when suddenly Fritz dropped a shell on parapet a few yards away. I got spattered with mud. A kind of initiation uncomfortably close tho. Time to "get in and get under." Aeroplanes were busy today and consequently so were anti-aircraft guns. A couple of Ruahine chaps were wounded by snipers. Received Ro Advocate and papers from ESB.

Wednesday 17 Trenches Very decent weather. Things quiet. Artillery did a little in afternoon. Am told that this part of trench where I am now was subjected to very heavy bombardment about 3 weeks ago and was very badly smashed about. Certainly shows signs of this. Of course trenches have to be built and patched up again. Fatigue parties are busy. Also was

told the signal station dug-out or built up was only one about here that didn't get knocked down. Chance. There was a gas alarm this evening but nothing came of it.

Thursday 18 Trenches Weather splendid. I went into hdqrs this morning. Things fairly quiet. aeroplanes busy. They received usual attention from anti-aircraft guns. Event of the day was receipt of 4 letters; 2 from home, 2 Wn. Trenches here swarm with rats. Some of them of great size. They are not very much afraid of humans.

Friday 19 Trenches Weather fine and warm. Nothing special to record.

Saturday 20 Same as yesterday. Interesting, isn't it?

Sunday 21 Trenches Sunday seems to have come round remarkable quickly this week. We are enjoying beautiful warm weather. This morning Fritz amused himself by knocking about some houses in rear of our lines. This afternoon some of our chaps greeted Fritz with a few rifle grenades. He sent some others back, landing uncomfortably near my "home." Discovered unexploded bomb with tail and fin-like arrangement. Max went and pulled it out of mud and took it along to the O.C. "What's the best thing to do with this?" he asked. The O.C. lost no time in telling him!

Monday 22 May 1916 Later. Obviously a miss! Won't do, lad. Won't do. Suppose it was ordinary.

Tuesday 23 Trenches Armentieres At 3.30 a.m. went into headquarters to meet and bring out the signallers of the Trents (2nd Bde) who were to relieve us. Saw W. Thompson from Patea R'lys. With 2 signallers got back to "bivvy" about 5 o'clock. During the morning there was a rather lively "go" between the artillery. New men took over from us at about 3 p.m. and shortly after we went into h'qrs. There I recvd paper mail, 3 Aucks, 1 Press, 3 newspapers and this splendid little diary. Will endeavour to keep it up. Then came into Armentieres and were billeted in municipal college. En route saw 4 German planes overhead. Also saw bombed "estaminet." Saw Aston and Voyle.

Wednesday 24 Armentieres Slept in this morning. Later had a look around. Buildings are smashed and scarred by shells and rifle fire. Windows shattered. We were paid 30 francs this afternoon equal to 21/-. Went out and did a little shopping. One can get just about everything here. Most of the business places are closed and deserted yet others still hang out. Rain fell in afternoon. In evening took stroll out other side town away from trenches. This seems more modern. It is not much damaged by the shellfire.

Thursday 25 Armentieres Weather rather dull. Early morning went up town. In afternoon signal section marched up to Pont Nieppe to baths there. This institution is absolutely splendid. Had a hot bath and exchanged my dirty underwear, towel etc for clean stuff. It was splendid. Felt like a new pin. I Believe this is usual bath for men coming out of trenches. A huge

staff of women are employed in laundry. S'bag factory noticed. In evening went with Norm Tingey to cinema show run by our padre in what was once a college. Enjoyed it very much. Splendid college buildings and ground.

Friday 26 Armentieres Went down to Battn Hqrs Sig office and gave hand all day. Our headquarters are in a very fine house. Very bare looking at the front but just the reverse at the back. The garden and lawn is splendid. There is a tennis court in one corner. Wish I could get hold of a couple of racquets. The original occupants of this house have gone, but some people live in some of the rooms and look after things. Wouldn't mind staying here in peace time. Can imagine things were kept in very fair style.

Saturday 27 May 1916 Armentieres Weather fine. Day occupied in 'phone and buzzer work. Received parcel from 104 M'ston. After tea went with Norman T to the cinema. Same programme as the one I saw Thursday. [There follows a sentence I cannot decipher]. Stayed for a while then went for walk. By what I can judge the town must be larger than Wgtn. It has a large number of factories. Plenty of tall smoke stacks - streets are cobbled. Electric tramways of course not working. In evening several shells landed rather close to our abode. Non bon!

Sunday 28 Armentieres Weather splendid. Church parade 9.45 a.m. After dinner N.T. and I went for walk around the town which is pretty well deserted in most parts. Went round by rlwy station thro' which I don't think trains have been running since 1914. Tangle of smashed signal wires and apparatus, lines overgrown with grass and weed etc. In our wanderings came across new cemetery. In one part was the burying place for civilians, most of whom were very aged, 70 - 80. Saw another part, British Forces. Saw graves of 25 NZ men. In evening went to church.

Monday 29 Armentieres Weather fine. Occupied in 'phone and buzzer practice. Quiet day. Went to cinema in evening, 6 to 8 p.m. Room here for a little note: our planes are almost continually hovering overhead observing. They receive fair attention from the enemy guns but don't seem to worry much. Still planes around serenely. The other day I noticed one particularly. He was up flying over the town from shortly after noon till above 6 p.m. Seemed to be having a game with German gunners who must have fired hundreds of shells at him without effect.

Tuesday 30 Armentieres A little rain fell during the night. Morning dull and rather chilly. Improved in afternoon though. Buzzer and phone practice. After tea went down to Q.M's store for our rations. When coming back met Earnshaw of artlly. Later in the evening we were paid 30 francs - 1-1-0. Saw Ted Toy. He was greatly surprised to see me here. He anticipates going to England on leave shortly.

Wednesday 31 May 1916 Armentieres Weather fine. The usual buzzer practice 9 a.m. to noon, 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. I'm afraid I find it rather monotonous. I did my time at "Morse" in the Gallery [?word]. On the door of one of the rooms in which we practice is the word "mathematiques." The window panes are practically all shattered with concussion and in one wall is a big shell hole. Poor "University de France." Would rather be

swotting maths than filling in time on morse. Just as I was writing this a letter came in for me

from GB. Hurray! It's decent to receive letters.

Thursday June 1 1916 Armentieres [At the top of the page is pencilled a Zeppelin with two parachutists descending from it]. Fine: Usual practice. Had dinner at an estaminet. After tea I witnessed rather an exciting incident. Time about 7 p.m. One of our captive balloons broke away from its moorings and drifted over the town at a fair height towards German lines. The two observers came down in parachutes. I saw only one descending. He was swinging like a pendulum as he came down. Don't know how he landed. Think he must have come down on our side alright. Both our own and enemy anti-aircraft guns expended a lot of ammunition attempting to bring balloon down. When I last saw it it was drifting beyond German lines. Planes flew around.

Friday 2 Armentieres Trenches Fine. Went up yesterday for bath and change u-wear. Very decent. We go into trenches again today. I go to same station as last time at C157: Came out and took over station at about 6 p.m. As I came in I passed S.B's taking out Capt Stansell who I learned had been wounded by a rifle grenade in head and leg. Also as I passed Tissage I saw Kivell of Stratford. A little later as I was coming along trench I came across Creighton, also of St'ford, looking well. Dave N. was to have come out here but this arrangement was altered that morning. When coming out here we leave our blankets and valise at Q.M's store in town and sleep in clothes.

Saturday 3 Trenches Fine. Was on duty 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. and again 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Artillery was rather active during day. Fritz sent over several trench mortar bombs one of which landed uncomfortably near my dug-out; about 15 yards away. Had rather an exciting moment. Mud and earth was thrown over and onto our "crib." The air was full of dust and the ground shook so that I expected our "home" to fall in on us. The concussion was considerable. However, no one was hurt. The explosion made a hole in the ground about 12' deep and 23' across. Some cracker! N.B: The hole is handy to empty rubbish into. Wrote Kodaks Cairo re photos.

Sunday 4 June 1916 Trenches Weather not quite as bright as yesterday. Slight spitting of rain. Didn't seem much like Sunday to me. Artillery did a little. Fritz sent some trench mortar bombs over. Think our artillery must have knocked his trench about a little. Was out on "dis" wires on three occasions today, the last about midnight. This afternoon and evening artillery has been fierce down Lille way. Rather chilly this evening. We are getting good food here. This morning for breakfast had fried steak; a splendid stew for dinner. We have butter, bread, cheese and Jam. Do very well indeed.

Monday 5 Trenches A little rain this morning. Weather slightly colder than yesterday. Some more mortar bombs came over. This morning our artillery shook Fritz up. This afternoon he retaliated into Houplines. Things were lively in both cases. Monotony was again relieved in evening. Bombs and r-grenades came over here very merrily for a while but no one was hurt. Our artillery retaliated. One of our wires became

"disabled" with bomb. Soon repaired though. Further news of naval battle. Seems to show things a little more in our favour. Rather bad business altogether. But "we can do it."

Tuesday 6 Trenches Rain last night and this morning. Trench outside is very slushy. Went into headquarters after dinner. Tonight at about 11.30 there was very heavy artillery "strafing" on both sides, down beyond Houplines. It lasted for some time. It was fairly warm. The flash of the guns and bursting shells lit up the whole sky. Star shells galore illuminated the trenches in the vicinity of the strafing. It was a very fine sight. Note: At nights star shells are sent up at frequent intervals from along trenches just to see how things are. Those used by the Germans seem to be much more brilliant than ours.

Wednesday 7 Trenches Weather fine. Trenches drying splendidly. Events of the day usual. Received a couple of papers from E.P.B. Good old Perce!

Thursday 8 Trenches Weather fine during earlier part of day but seemed inclined to rain towards evening. There is little to record. A very quiet day. Received news of death of K of K. P. White is in the coy occupying this trench.

Friday 9 Trenches Fine. Nothing particular to record. An ordinary day.

Saturday 10 June 1916 Trenches Fine. Was out trying to discover "dis" in the battery line from 1 to 3 a.m. It was eventually fixed at battery end. Got back to sleep again. At the present time dawn commences about 2.30 a.m. Could hear the old cuckoos calling and answering one another. They are always just now to be heard early in the morning. Nothing very startling for rest of day. Of course there was the usual daily artillery strafe.

Sunday 11 Trenches Doesn't seem much like Sunday. Same as any other day in trenches as regards work. Weather changing. Rain fell last night and intermittently today. Trenches are very slushy and unpleasant. Oscar Johnson left to go to school. Ted Arnold taking his place. This afternoon things were lively for a while. We started up by presenting Fritz with a number of 60lb trench mortar bombs. The "beastly things" went off when they arrived over there. Fritz sent some of his grenades and a few other bombs over to us. They also went off. 7 or 8 men hurt.

Monday 12 Trenches The weather is rotten. Rain, slush, mud and not too warm. Our dug-out is very comfy and is a good place to stay in this weather. Outside one slips and slides about trying to keep right end up. This is summer? A most important item got crowded out of yesterday's notes. Went into hqrs in the morning and got 4 letters. Splendid! Things have been quiet today. Our artillery did a bit but did not receive much reply. Gus Russell, Birdwood, Braithwaite came round visiting trenches. Tonight there were sounds of heavy bombardment towards Ypres which is only about 11 miles distant. It ceased about 10 p.m. (but again continued a little later).

Tuesday 13 Trenches Weather still abominable. Trenches in a very slushy condition. Went into C150 this afternoon. Was slipping and sliding. Of course this wasn't so all the way. For the most part the duck boards in the trench bottom are OK. But just imagine. This is nearly mid-summer! We shouldn't get this rotten weather. This afternoon Fritz tossed a few trench mortars over on to Taranaki trenches. Tonight I have just heard that Canadians have retaken the lines which they lost a little while ago. Hooray! Hence last night's bombardment. There was

something doing. Am hearing good news of Russian successes.

Wednesday 14 June 1916 Trenches Weather still very unpleasant. A number of heavy trench mortar bombs were sent over on to Taranaki lines this afternoon. Things were lively for a while. Our artillery retaliated. Understand some of our chaps were hurt. One can see these big TM bombs in the air. They strike the ground, a second's pause and then with a deafening explosion earth and debris is hurled up about 100ft or more in the air. A great sight. This afternoon we were paid 30 francs; 21/-. Jimmy McD went into Hdqrs and got ours. Not much use for it out here tho.

Wednesday 15 Trenches Weather slightly improved today. Have learnt that in yesterday afternoon's strafe on Taranaki there were two killed and ten wounded. Killed - George Thrupp and Gillies, Both were in "bivvy" when a minnewerfer landed on it. Both were killed instantaneously. Last night to bring us into line with the daylight saving scheme at home clocks were advanced an hour. Wrote to E.P.B.

Friday 16 Trenches Sun came out this morning and was most welcome. I think that we are in for some good weather now. Fine all day. Our aeroplanes were busy this morning and afternoon. Ted Arnold went out sick about dinner time. Another chap was sent out as relief after tea. There was a "bit of a do" (as the Tommies say) tonight. We had a few days ago an inkling that something would be done soon. At 11.15 artillery and trench mortars opened bombardment on Fritz's trench and kept going pretty hot until midnight. Then I understand H. Bay Coy was to make a raid. Have no particulars yet (4.31 a.m. 17th). Bombs etc came over here. Six wounded including Lt Thomson, all rather badly.

Saturday 17 Trenches Lt Thomson died as he was being taken out on stretcher. At about 5 a.m. this morning there was a gas alarm. I had been on duty long hours and was sleeping soundly when Mac aroused me. I lost little time in getting on my helmet. The syren was going and I signalled through in morse "gas attack." In a few minutes however alarm was found to be false. Smoke from German trenches had been blown towards us. The alarm was then given. Today things have been very quiet. Calm after storm. Weather today was sunny and warm. Welcome change. Trenches are drying splendidly. Yesterday morning Mac went into shop beyond Houplines. Purchased a few luxuries. Chocolates etc.

Sunday 18 June 1916 Trenches This morning at 2 a.m. our artillery strafed Fritz's trench for about half an hour. Lately we have had very little artillery reply from Fritz: chiefly trench mortars. Perfect weather all day. Things have been very quiet. This afternoon I went into Hdqrs and received a photo and Auck Weekly from Johnnie Ross. Gen. Braithwaite and Col paid a

visit of inspection. It seems strange when I think that today is Sunday. In outward appearance it's just the same as any other day. Learnt that Keith Ditchman transferred to naval communications.

Monday 19 Trenches A haze has been hanging about all day. Noticed and reported such to Hdqrs a lamp or heliograph flashing over in Armentieres. Maybe spies signalling to Germans. This afternoon a very heavy artillery "strafe" was expected but it didn't come off here. Things were in fact rather quiet. Last night there was a bit of a "strafe." Our artillery dropped it onto

Fritz solidly for a while. In this part he replied with bombs and grenades. Things were lively for about half an hour before and after midnight. Wires on one side got cut. Had "pleasure" of going out and mending them. Wrote home.

Tuesday 20 Trenches to Tissage Weather fine although it tried to rain in afternoon. Happily couldn't! A quiet day. A few planes up reconnoitring. This evening after 8 o'clock Otago signallers came in and relieved us. Under instructions from Hdqrs Mac Berry and I proceeded to "Tissage Post" signal station. We got there about 9 o'clock. There was no one in office but as I had been there before was OK. The office here is not at all bad. It's in a kind of cellar basement. It's fine to have room to move about inside. We have decent mattresses for bunks.

Wednesday 21 Tissage Weather fine. This morning after breakfast got a great surprise. Met Tom White. He was in the street with a pick on his shoulder just going out on a fatigue cleaning rubbish out of a small stream which runs near here. Went down later to where he was toiling. With gumboots on he was in the water throwing out putrid rubbish and mud. Few dead rats also. Chaps disturbed a tear shell. Not nice job. This afternoon I went into Hdqrs and then into town. McNeal came back with me. This makes 4 on this station. A new line was run out here. Noticed fleet of about half dozen planes over town way.

Thursday 22 June 1916 Tissage Weather fine. This is not a bad little home. Today scored a very decent box spring mattress. In afternoon by accident came across O.P. From a height of about 120ft had a splendid view of countryside towards Lille. Saw spires and higher buildings of latter city through powerful telescope. Trees hid lower bldgs. Could see lines of our and Fritz's trenches. Watched effect of our shells on latter. Some good shooting. I thoroughly enjoyed the hour or so spent up there. Country is so level here that unless one gets up a fair height one can't see much. Artillery strafe at night. False gas alarm.

Friday 23 Tissage Fine. Artillery was busy this morning. Until about 4.30 p.m the day was very fine and fairly warm. Then became overcast and very dark. Had thunder storm and rain. In afternoon went into Hdqrs. Bill Ryder and Holmes have also come out here - six of us now. Went for a little stroll later over ground surrounding splendid old chateau near banks of Lys. What must have been beautiful grounds is now tangle of overgrowth. Nevertheless it was splendid. Profusion of beautiful roses and other flowers, fine old trees, etc. The old chateau is of course deserted, windows shuttered. It bears marks of shell fire. Seems a great shame. Rcvd 2 letters - Wgtn and B.D. (photos).

Saturday 24 Tissage Fine. This afternoon went for walk with McD. Went over grounds of old chateau. Mac fished in the river with a worm on a pin! There was nothing doing with the finny ones. This part of the river was very pretty - fine old trees etc. The buildings adjacent were all smashed about by shell fire. They were of course unoccupied. The old chateau which I mentioned must be hundreds of years old. The old grounds surrounding it contain good orchards etc. Strawberry beds also but one needs to get up early for them.

Sunday 25 Tissage Fine. Today has been a day of cleaning. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Cleaned everything out of our domicile and scrubbed the place out. Used disinfectant liberally. The place is now like a new pin. Fixed up new bed. "Our 'ome" now contains 1 single

bed, 1 double bed and 1 double single bed, that is one long bunk on which two sleep feet to feet. We have our meals in an adjoining room. We are OK here. We also had splendid hot bath, first one since a day or so before going into trenches last time. Not before time. It is now nearly midnight. A heavy bombardment is in progress 11 pm.

Monday 26 June 1916 Tissage Last night a raid on the German trenches was carried out by the T's. We bombarded from about 11.15 p.m. till about 12.30 a.m. I understand it was carried out very successfully, Fritz's lines being pierced for some distance back. About a dozen prisoners were taken. I understand a fair number of Germans were killed and wounded, a working party being caught. Fritz dropped a number of shells into town this morning. Retribution. This evening our planes brought down by incendiary bombs 3 enemy observation balloons. Good work. This morning and greater part of afternoon fine. Rain started about 4 p.m. and continued showery.

Tuesday 27 Tissage This morning I went down to Hdqrs and from there on to the baths. Today was pay-day but I didn't draw. Want to get a bit of a credit! It has been cloudy and showery. Geof Holmes and I went out big game hunting with two rifles. Our bag was three rats with three shots. Terribly exciting!

Wednesday 28 Tissage Still raining this morning. Went into town with Bill Ryder. Had dinner there. "Eggs a' cook." Saw Jack McKain and later Herbert Nissen [?name]. H.N. tells me he participated in the raid a few nights ago. He showed me one or two trophies, in the form of buttons, rifle silencer etc. Seems great that he should be here. Williamson replaced Gerry [?name] up here today. One of our chaps suffering with measles and two contacts, N.E.G. and H.S. went into isolation this afternoon. Down the line a little a solid bombardment commenced at about 11 p.m.

Thursday 29 Tissage Weather has improved. Has been fine today. As a pastime the "boys" have taken up the sport of archery out in the back yard. This in wartime! This afternoon received 7 letters; 5 home, 1 B.S., 1 from Jack Martin. Cheering! Dave brought them up here from D.R.A. Believe a chap (?) from 1st Bdge stretcher bearers went across to German side this morning or yesterday. One can't find words for this traitor. He was a Hun I believe. His information will be very handy for Fritz. Our fellows would like to get hold of him.

Friday 30 Tissage Fine. Last night a rather heavy artillery strafe started at midnight and lasted for about an hour. (The strafe was from our guns). I had to go on 11 p.m. till 2 a.m. Not getting up for breakfast I slept on till dinner time. Despatched 2 letters, 1 home, 1 M.D. During this evening there was a heavy artillery strafe. Our guns were busy and Fritz seemed to wake up a bit for he sent a good deal over this way. Little results, tho', I think. Our planes are showing incr' activity. A fleet of about 20 went over towards Fritz's lines this evening.

Saturday July 1 1916 Tissage Recd 3 papers from Perce Beauchamp. The day has been very fine. Our planes have been very busy all day. A fleet of about a dozen have been soaring away overhead like big hawks. After tea went into town. Went down alongside right hand side river and was then in Belgian territory. struck with the number of factories in the town. I met a great number of old chums, chiefly Trents, Creighton, McKain, Haxton, Geof Hill, Kivell and others. Sunset tonight was glorious. A beautiful crimson sky against which was silhouetted Kemmel.

Sunday 2 Tissage Beautiful day. Am becoming very lazy lately. slept in till dinner time. Then after dinner went with Bill Ryder for a decent walk which I enjoyed very much. Strolled into Belgium then re-crossed the Lys back into France (and Armentieres). Went along a beautiful promenade by the Lys. On the way back called in at Hdqrs. Saw Dave who told me about another exciting incident he experienced. A shell struck a building in which he was. Luckily he was not harmed. Poor old boy must have got a start. Our planes active all day. Saw Sussons [? name] in town.

Monday 3 Tissage Fine. Went into town again this afternoon for a walk and incidentally a hair-cut. The latter service was performed by a most youthful barber. Last night we carried out a raid on Fritz's trenches and opposite my old "possy." By what I hear it wasn't quite as successful as it might have been. Our losses were fairly heavy. "Comparatively." Fritz was ready. Lt Munro (of Malones Sqd) was killed, also Kelly DCM man, and a number of others I don't know. Lt Sheldon wounded.

Tuesday 4 Tissage There was a heavy bombardment last night. Fritz dropped some heavy metal over this way, some of it not so very far away from my present "home." Bits were flying about. The air was thick with smoke from the explosions. A number of shells, including 12 inch, fell into Armentieres. Some buildings were set afire. The sky was all aglow and the sight was rather fine, if not awesome. I hear the attack was made on some of our trenches up here but was easily repelled. A fairly lively night. Today a number of shells have been falling near here. After a battery I think. Fragments have been dropping about outside.

Wednesday 5 July 1916 Tissage Everything very quiet last night. Quite unusual. Did a little washing today. My big khaki handkerchief, after a process of boiling, turned out purple! Rain fell late in afternoon. Tonight at about 11 p.m. there was a heavy bombardment along the line over African's way. There was a gas alarm but we got none over here. Rcvd p.c. from Hbt. Papers for the last few days have been full of reports of the advance down south of us. Hope it continues.

Thursday 6 Tissage Rain fell again this afternoon. Must be rather unpleasant up in trenches. Artillery has been fairly quiet today (comparatively). Fritz sent a few shells over town way. This morning a couple of "alleged spies" were taken down past here to town. Believe they have since been released. Wrote home this afternoon. There was considerable artillery activity again towards midnight.

Friday 7 Tissage Went up to baths at about 10 a.m. Had dinner at Pont de Nieppe. Veal heart, liver and fried eggs, a great repast. Champagne etc. Returned to Hdqrs and after having tea with Dave (eggs a' cook) went with him to "our" picture show. Enjoyed the old movies. There met Pinny [?name] and Burgess. Learned that Phillips had been killed. I retired back here about 9 p.m. Rain fell in the morning but sky cleared later. Understand that we will be leaving this "home" for trenches tomorrow.

Saturday 8 Tissage - Trenches Rain started again 2 a.m. however later it cleared off and the day was fine and warm. Slept in till dinner time, after which I went into town. Posted letters home, also copies Fragments, do and 284 [think this refers to Bairnsfather's book]. Hunted

around trying find Fillo Cashier [?another book]. After some wandering succeeded and was informed money cabled me was in London. Bon for holidays. Saw Roy Foden and Asden. Wilf informed of McKay's death. Returned D129 about 5 p.m. when I learnt we were to go into trenches. McD, Ted Arnold and self to C157 my old station. Arrived at latter about 8.30 p.m. A change after our recent ease and luxury. My credit in paybook is now over 8.

Sunday 9 July 1916 Trenches Was on 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. The weather today has been "absolutely" perfect. This day at Day's Bay, Plimmerton or Paekok. Daydreams! Dibble is also out here "resident linesman." He is occupying a "bivvy" next door. At 7 p.m. this evening the LTM's sent over to Fritz a few hundred of their deadly missiles. Reply was slight. Tonight at about 11 p.m. our artillery strafed the Huns very solidly a little way along. I think there must have been a raid on. Fritz brought searchlights into play. Things were busy.

Monday 10 Trenches Fine. This morning watched Fritz shelling a church over to right Armentieres. He also shelled and set fire to a large detached house. Our artillery of course retaliated briskly. This afternoon things were busy along on our right. Minnewerfers, other H.E. and shrapnel. Think we, as usual, started the ball rolling. At about 4 p.m. I went into Hdqrs. Tonight at about 11 p.m., the usual time, there was heavy strafe on the right again and I understand the Maoris made a raid. We put gas over - wind very favourable.

Tuesday 11 Trenches Fine, but a little cooler. Aeroplanes were up last night; humming away up in the darkness. Slept up till noon, was then on duty 1 p.m. till 7 p.m. Went for walk into Hdqrs. A quiet day. Our predecessors have left a little windfall in the form of stores. Pickles, Q oats, milk, cafe au lait etc etc. Bon for soldiers! Flies are fairly plentiful now, in here anyhow. However, they don't annoy one like the Egyptian --s.

Wednesday 12 Trenches Between midnight and 3 a.m. there was a good deal of strafing up the line on our immediate right. Understand we put gas over again. The Huns are getting a taste of their own medicine. Slept all morning. Slight rain in afternoon. This afternoon at about 3.30 p.m. the L.T.M's got busy down this way again. The shells (LTM) simply rained onto Fritz's lines. He replied weakly with artillery. No one hurt here. Tonight on account of strafe I went on at 10.30 p.m. at which time there commenced a solid artillery go. Our 18 pounders barked for about 3/4 hour, then ceased.

Thursday 13 July 1916 Trenches Our 18 prs opened up again about midnight. Fritz replied briskly but without effect. Missed us!! O. He continued his fire so we gave him some more, howitzers etc. Things were interesting right up to 3 a.m. As I enter this it is 3.35 a.m., and now going to bunk. Got up for breakfast then slumbered till noon. McD went into town and brought back some delicacies also about 7 magazines. Tonight commencing about 10 p.m. things were lively. A little way up the line we put over gas. When flares went up I could see great clouds of it rolling over towards Fritz's trenches. Artillery was busy.

Friday 14 Trenches The show continued until about 2 a.m. I came on at 3 a.m. Raining slightly. At about 5 a.m. runner brought in 6 letters. Rays of sunshine. This morning I found a "dud" aerial torpedo or bomb. Fritz had forgotten to pull pin out. Would very much liked to have kept it as souvenir but can't carry it around until I get an opportunity of sending it away. The day

turned out fine. Have not heard the cuckoos lately. Perhaps they have gone south again. Swallows are still here.

Saturday 15 Trenches About midnight we put over a number of rifle grenades and stirred up the Huns who replied with aerial torpedoes and a minnewerfer or two. 2 "minnies" landed uncomfortably near but hurt no-one. Stirred up a "big smell." The day has been fine. Along the way a bit Fritz has been dropping shrapnel over. Our 18 prs gave solid retaliation. At the same spot tonight at about 11 p.m. there was a good deal of strafe.

Sunday 16 Trenches C157 to C115 Subsidiary. Was on duty 11 a.m. yesterday till 3 a.m. this morning. Slept on until about dinner-time. Was on again 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. A quiet day. About three o'clock we received instructions that we would be relieved and that we were to proceed to a station in the subsidiary lines, C115. The Otago Sigs relieved us at about 8 p.m. and came up here. This bivvy is somewhat larger (not much more tho') than C157. However, it needs to be. There are now four on the station. F. Searle extra. It rained a little today and coming up we found the duckboards exasperatingly slippery.

Monday 17 July 1916 Sub trenches Today has been a day of industry generally improving our sanctuary. A tier bunk was put in one end, a table fixed and a shelf put up. It is now just OK. The place is set off with carpet mats if you please! A window in the rear admits plenty of light. Went down to see Dave who is at a station a little way down in a cemetery! His bivvy is a very poor affair. Says he passes his time at night killing centipedes, mosquitoes etc. A quiet day.

Tuesday 18 Sub trenches The weather is perfect. Makes one feel well - bright. Our bivvy here is situated on the border of a field of oats. Some time ago before the crop got as high as it is at present I noticed some stooks on the other side. It was most probably being harvested when war broke out in 1914. It has of course re-sown itself. The crop is a fine one. To behold it takes one's thoughts away from this strife to days of peace. Machine gun bullets skim closely overhead with a plaintive little whistle and "plop" further back. Otherwise things are very quiet just here. Shells of course "laze" across overhead.

Wednesday 19 Sub trenches Beautiful weather. Aeroplanes have been fairly active. From about 11 a.m. till 6 p.m. there was incessant bombardment. The Australians preparation for an attack. I understand they attacked then and occupied Fritz's first line. Wars [?word] news was telegraphed through and everyone seemed very pleased with it. Later news however reported that in certain parts they had to fall back to their own lines later. Our artillery was busy during the evening. Some heavy stuff went across.

Thursday 20 Subsidiary to Hdqrs D138 Delightful weathah. A little after dinner Sgt rang up for me to come in to Hdqrs to take place of Emens who had gone to hospital with measles. Arrived down at Hdqrs at about 2 p.m. About 4 p.m. went down to Div baths. Returned about 8 p.m. and took on duty till 2 a.m. I am on Brigade wire. It isn't bad down here. Hdqrs is in a fine house. We have for our office a fine oakpanelled dining room. Good bunks and good food. Fritz sent over a lot of heavy stuff this way. We adjourned to cellar for a while.

Friday 21 July 1916 Hdqrs (Houplines) Splendid weather. On a/c of measles case we are in

isolation, which however is not adhered to very strictly. A good deal of heavy stuff came over near here this morning. After a battery I think. This afternoon went down to baths again to get clothes fumigated. Plant wasn't working when we went down yesterday. The surroundings here are very decent. A fine place. The N.Z. Parliamentarians were about here today. Saw Dick Masters at baths. Ray Barrel has gone back to Coy.

Saturday 22 Hdqrs Fine weather. Am suffering from rather sore throat. Generally indisposed. We are having very good food here. For instance dinner tonight we had roast mutton, roast potatoes, while for sweets we had stewed pears, custard and marmalade toast. This isn't "arf bad." Besides one has room to move about - the house and grounds are fine - a bit different to a 4ft high dug-out! There are all conveniences here too. The day has been very quiet.

Sunday 23 Hdqrs A fine day. Was on duty 2 a.m. to 8 a.m. Spent the rest of the morning and an hour or so of the afternoon in bunk. Went down to "medical" and got some Condy's tablets for my sore throat. By the way, I don't seem to be only one so affected. It seems to be going about. Sgt Len Nicholas received today the Military Medal, awarded him in recognition of his coolness and good work. Good luck to him. This morning for a while shells were landing over this way but apart from this things have been quiet.

Monday 24 Hdqrs Fine Weather. Spent most of the morning in bunk. I am afraid I am becoming (?) very lazy. Of course I was on till 2 a.m. this morning. Some justification. On again at 2 p.m. This evening after 8 p.m. went for a stroll with "Johnny." Wandering led us to big house not far away. Started exploring the old place which was rather the worse for age and shells. On the floor of the top story were strewn old papers etc. Found some as old as 1703. Day has been quiet.

Tuesday 25 July 1916 Hdqrs Was on duty 8 a.m to 2 p.m. The sky was rather overcast this afternoon. Almost inclined to rain. Went into town with "Johnny." Changed boots at Q.M's. Saw Lynch and Goodall. Also Jack Voyle who told me that Aston has been wounded. He is trying to find out more about him for me. Sgt and Cpl and another went away today to look over the place where I expect we will be going in a day or so. They returned about 4 p.m. Our artillery has been very quiet the last three or four days. Perhaps they want things quiet while the new lot take over.

Wednesday 26 Hdqrs Was on 2 a.m. till 7 p.m. Slept during morning and an hour or so of afternoon. A bit of a hog for sleep lately. Making the most of good times and a good bunk. Went for a stroll after tea. Tonight at about 11 p.m. a strafe started on the other side of the river. I believe there was a raid being made by the "Tommies." The artillery was stirring up things. This lasted for over an hour. Today the sky has been overcast.

Thursday 27 Hdqrs D138 - Hdqrs D141 About 10 a.m. this morning there was a gas alarm. However none came over this way. It was over the river somewhere. I now understand our shift to new parts is off. A little after dinner Mr King came along and instructed all who were not on duty to report at D141 at 2 p.m. Rather sudden. It was evident we were going into our old trenches again. We packed up and went. Took over a little later in afternoon. We were very sorry to have to leave our fine quarters. The office of D141 is in the basement. Gloomy. Candles had to be used yesterday.

Friday 28 D141 - Trench C129 Was on duty 9 p.m. last night till 3 a.m. this morning. At about 1 a.m. there was a gas alarm starting on the other side river. Nothing came over this way. A little later Fritz opened up a fairly solid strafe on our trenches left and centre. We of course replied and things quietened down about 3 o'clock. Later heard that things had been lively down C129 way. Bill Ryder had been hit in the ear with an aerial torpedo fragment. In consequence I had to come out and take his place. A party of Germans came out last night cutting our entanglements. Our bombers surprised them. They left behind one dead. Our chaps brought body in later.

Diary continued in "Diaries3.Doc."