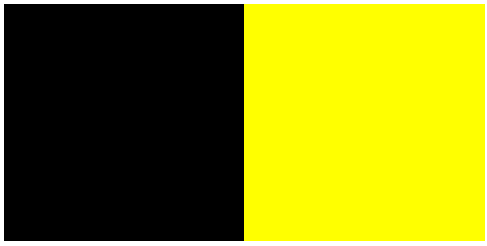
Diary
of
Pte Raymond Pye

'C' Company
29th & 32nd Battalions
Attached to the 8th Brigade



Australian Imperial Force

1915 – 1919
Egypt, France & Belgium

I have herein described most of the incidents and experiences that have happened to me while with the *Australian Imperial Force* in Egypt and France and Belgium.
1915 – 1919
'C' Company, 29th & 32nd Battalions – Attached to the 8th Brigade

On **July 10th 1915** I enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force for active service abroad. I had, up to a few days before that, no intention of enlisting but I heard that two lads I knew well had decided to go so from that moment I wasn't satisfied until I had tried my luck too. So on July 12th I went to Melbourne and easily passed the Doctor. There was over 1,000 men per day going through at that time and it took me a couple of days to get finally sworn in. I then had a few days holiday at home before going to camp. I had to report at the barracks on July 21st, which I did and a trainload of us were sent to *'Seymour Camp'* about a couple of miles from the Goulburn River. At that time there was 25,000 men camped there. The weather was rather wet and there was a good deal of sickness about. One part of the camp was known as 'Siberia' on account of the wet condition of the ground there. Luckily where I was, was much better on account of being on a rise. We spent three weeks there during which time we were instructed in drill and rifle exercises. I'll never forget our first rifle exercise. The Sergt. Major was roaring at the top of his voice and he made an awkward squad of some of us, though I managed to escape that.

Our next camp was 'Broadmeadows' which is about 10 miles from Melbourne. This camp was better in parts than 'Seymour' but where there was mud it was an awful black sticky kind. We lived in huts and a few days after we got there the 29th Battalion was formed which was to form a part of the 8th Infantry Brigade commanded by Col. Tivey. Once we were formed up we started to drill in earnest and we soon began to look like soldiers – even if we were not.

I was allotted to 'C' Company, which had for C.O. a Captain who was wounded in the retreat from Mons. He was a splendid officer and knew his work from A to Z and also understood men properly. About the end of October we heard we were sailing early in November so we got six days final leave. I stayed seven days and got fined a days pay but I reckoned I got off light as I had easily a days pay of fun on the extra day.

When we got back from leave we found we were to sail on November 10th. Reveille (bugle to waken soldiers) was at 4am and we got the train about 7 or 8am if I remember rightly. We might not have been so cheerful had we known to what we were going to, but the future didn't worry us in the least. The train took us on to the wharf at Port Melbourne and we embarked on the (A11) *S S Ascanius* [1].

The Ascanius *being farewelled at Port Melbourne.*

By noon everyone was aboard and the people were allowed on the pier and wasn't there a crowd. There was rather a strong breeze blowing and when at 1pm the boat pulled out, there was quite a number of men lost their hats or caps. One woman fell off, or was pushed by the crowd, from the pier but she was soon rescued by some boatmen.

About dusk we passed through the 'Heads' or out of Port Phillip Bay and the ship began to rock a little. I had been on the water before so knew I'd be sick as I always was on the first day. But I went to bed in my hammock and during the night I could feel the boat rolling, but the hammock always hung level so I felt all right. At daylight I got up and as soon as I put my feet on deck I knew I'd soon be '*feeding the fish*' and I was within half an hour. But I was only one of hundreds engaged in the same miserable occupation. I didn't eat anything that day and I remained on deck practically all the time. I slept fairly well that night and wasn't ill, and next day in spite of not feeling very hungry I decided to eat something; I sat down and once I started I felt right and ate a good breakfast. There was only about 6 or 8 to eat 22 men's rations so we had plenty that day. I didn't get sick again. The third day out was very rough and it was hard to keep your feet without holding onto something.

I was Mess Orderly that day and the plates kept flying from one end of the table to the other. The seas constantly broke over the bows of the ship and flooded the forward well deck and plenty of men got wet through. One huge wave broke the end of the washhouse in. I pitied the poor chaps who hadn't got over their seasickness. Some of them would have welcomed a watery grave, and some were ill for the whole voyage and were admitted to hospital.

After we left the Australian coast the weather got beautiful and warm till as we neared the equator it was far too hot to be pleasant. We couldn't' walk on the decks without sand shoes. I ran about in socks most of the time and of course had to get over the deck at a run. However, I enjoyed the voyage immensely. I devoted a lot of time to learning signalling – both Morse and semaphore. There were great numbers of flying fish in the Indian Ocean but we didn't see a sign of land or a ship for 3 weeks. In the Gulf of Aden

we saw a school of porpoises. There were hundreds of them leaping out of the water and they looked fine.

Our first sight of land was a big headland on the coast of Africa and didn't we gaze at it! But it was a long way off. We pulled up at Aden for about half an hour and it looked an uninviting place with its great rocks rising hundreds of feet out of the water.

A – Melbourne. B- Aden Yemen. C- Suez Canal.

From here we had to pass between great barren rocks into the Red Sea. The actual entrance is called 'Hell's Gate' and that is rather an appropriate name, I think. It took us about three days to steam up the Red Sea and we frequently saw the barren sandy shores of Arabia and the opposite shore of Egypt.

December 8th 1915

We arrived at Port Suez and remained on board till 10th. It was about noon on that date that we disembarked and entrained to 'Heliopolis'[2] near 'Cairo'. The whole country presented a poor spectacle to us who were used to plenty of green fields and big trees. Here and there along the railway there were bits of irrigation land where some palms and other things were growing. It was all strange to us, therefore interesting. The natives came on the train selling oranges, hard-boiled eggs, watermelons and tomatoes. They did some trade too. They also had sweets, one kind being Turkish Delight but I failed to see or taste the 'delight' part of it. Oranges were very cheap and got cheaper as the train went on. We got about 16 for 1s/- (1 shilling) and good ones too. They tried to take us down right and left and, of course, succeeded in some instances as we were new and didn't know the ropes.

When we arrived at 'Heliopolis' we had about a mile to march to 'Aerodrome Camp'[2], which was right on the outskirts of the town. As it was dark when we arrived we soon settled into our tents and slept – somewhat cool after our warm sleeping quarters on the ship.

December 11th 1915

There being no sight of breakfast after we'd been up awhile we decided to go into the town and buy some, so off we went and within half an hour the camp was deserted. We had a look around the town for a start. Heliopolis is a fine place and contains many beautiful buildings, one of the most notable being the Palace Hospital which stands in its own grounds and is surrounded by beautiful gardens and lawns. There are also some very fine churches. We had a feed when we found a restaurant or what they call a feed. It consisted of about 2 minute sausages and some vegetables. Why to us it wasn't even enough to give us an appetite for a feed! They had evidently a poor idea of what we considered a feed.

Our next job was to change our money into 'Piastres', which is the standard Egyptian coin and worth about 2½d. (Tuppence ha'penny) We got about 97 for £1 and a fellow seemed to have a pocketful of money. There are 5, 10 and 20 piastre coins – we called the 20 piastres 'cart wheels' on account of their great size. We started spending piastres as if they were pennies and soon found it ran away with the cash of course. The niggers were out to make money by every fair and unfair means in their power, and asked exorbitant prices from us new chums, but we'd been warned about them so were alive to their tricks.

From Heliopolis we got the electric tram to Cairo about 6 miles away. The moment we stepped off the tram we were beset with nigger-boys, who wanted to sell this, that and the other for fancy prices of course. The bootblacks were particularly persistent and would start operations without so much as 'by your leave'. A game of theirs was to shine one boot and then demand payment or they'd not do the other. The victim had to fork out or go with one shined boot, and of course the nigger generally got his money that way.

One Aussie used to carry a snake in his pocket and frighten the niggers with it, though it was harmless enough. We got canes and kept the boys at a distance with them. We had about 20 men in our party and after walking about the streets awhile we at last found ourselves in one of the lowest quarters of the town, and it was 'low'. The streets were very narrow and winding and as filthy as could be. The extra narrow footpaths (when there was one) were occupied by handcarts on which dirty niggers displayed their wares. The smell and flies were enough to make one sick and you'd see a cart of some sort of meal cake simply black with flies. How anyone could eat the stuff beats me.

We saw many unmentionable things in this vicinity and I would not have believed such things could be, had I not the evidence of my own eyes. This part of Cairo is known as the 'Wassa' and the best thing that could have happened was for the lot to be burned down. It wasn't safe to go there alone, especially at night.

After this we went to a better part of the city and had dinner. This was a much better meal than breakfast had been. We had a nigger giving us an exhibition of sword swallowing while we ate. He certainly poked a walking stick at least a foot down his throat; then of course handed the hat around.

After dinner we got a guide who took us round a bit and to the Mosque of Sultan Hassan and Sultan Raffi. The two Mosques are separated by a street and quite near the Citadel. They are of great interest and date back many hundred years. You can still see cannon balls in the walls, which were fired by Napoleon's guns. Inside there are many works of great age and marvellous workmanship. The carving indoors is wonderful and is all inlaid with ivory and was once inlaid with gold and gems, but Napoleon removed these. The Mosque of Sultan Raffi is the finer of the two and to go inside you have to wear slippers over your boots. It is very quiet and gloomy and is altogether most impressive. We only spoke in whispers inside it. The carpets are reputed to be 500 years old though to look at them they might be brand new. The windows are of stained glass and set very high in the walls. A great lamp hangs by a chain from the dome, which is about 300 feet high. The lamp is of brass.

From here we went and had tea and after that went back to Heliopolis well pleased with our days outing. I think we had seen as much as possible in the time.

December 12th 1915

After a good night's rest we awoke to a rather warm morning. We had breakfast in mess huts made of matting thrown over a wood frame. We had to drill and Oh! the dust was choking. It made us its own colour and got everywhere, it rose in clouds when we moved over it, and we didn't look forward to spending seven weeks there as we had been told we would before going to the Peninsular.

December 13th 1915

We did a bit more drill over the awful dust, and being a Saturday we got the afternoon off, at least half of us got leave to Cairo and the other half were told they would get it next day. A party of us made straight for the Pyramids when we got to the city. They are a good distance out but a tram runs there. The tramline runs along a beautiful road with an avenue of various kinds of trees along it. The first close view of the Pyramids is surprising. I was astonished at the size of them. A man feels like a fly on a mountain when he gets to the foot of the largest one which is 450 feet high. There are three large ones and one tiny one in this group. 'Cheops' is the only one of the three that ordinary tourists can climb. I went to the top of it and it took $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour hard work. It's like going up steps only each step is about 2-$\frac{1}{2}$ foot high which is the size of the blocks of stone of which the pyramid is built.

A nigger had a little fire on top at which he made tea and charged 6d (sixpence) a cup for it, but I had a cup just for the sake of saying I'd had a drink there.

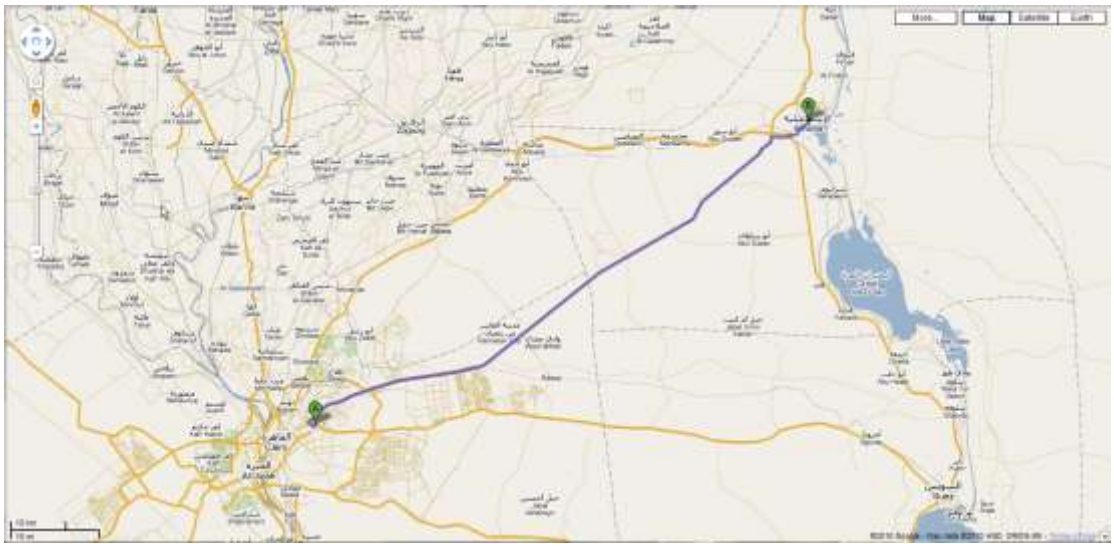
The view from the summit is very extensive and includes the Nile Valley and Cairo. In the desert near by is the remains of an ancient city, which is almost buried in the sand now. The Sphinx is quite near and we went to it, also to an old Temple called 'The Temple of the Sun'. It is made of great blocks of stone about 10 feet high and 4 feet square. How they were ever got into position beats me! From here we returned by tram to Cairo, had tea, and then went home again well pleased with what we had seen.

14th December 1915

[3]Being Sunday and no parade we were to have more leave but suddenly all leave was cancelled and we were told we were going to the Suez Canal. We thought the Turks had attacked it or something. We struck camp in the afternoon and marched out at 10pm and entrained a little before midnight.

15th December 1915

The train left about 12:15am and we arrived at 'Ismailia' at 4am and lay on the sand until daylight.



A - Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt. B - Ismailia, Egypt.

Then we marched to the canal bank and got a boat and were taken about 4 miles down to a little post called 'Tussum'[3]. There was only the one Company of us there, and it wasn't bad as far as conditions went but food was rather light, and for the smokers, tobacco was very scarce. I enjoyed very much, swimming in the beautiful clear water of the canal. It was winter at this time but wasn't at all cold even at night, but there was a thick mist and dew at nights which would make you quite wet and then you'd get cold of course. Whenever a passenger boat went through there was generally some tobacco or cigarettes thrown to us, which usually fell into the water, but provided the stuff was in tins it didn't hurt for the few seconds it was afloat. Men used to go in, clothes and all, for the tobacco. However, a wetting didn't hurt anyone in the warm weather. We spent 3 weeks at this post during which we did patrols along the banks of the canal. It seemed a great thing to us and we half expected to see a Turk behind some of the sand hills; at least we had that sort of feeling. Anyway we never so much as saw a Turk.

At intervals along the banks there are mooring posts for ships and these were fired on several times after being challenged and of course not answering. There was great speculation as to the reason if we heard a shot fired anywhere.

By day there was nothing much to do except get the rations over from the opposite bank. To do that we had to put a huge punt across by means of two chains which ran over the punt itself and 10 men on each chain. Camels brought the stuff to the punt.

We had a very quiet Christmas and New Year here and really hardly realised it was Christmas time. We got very little pudding or anything else.[4]

3rd January 1916

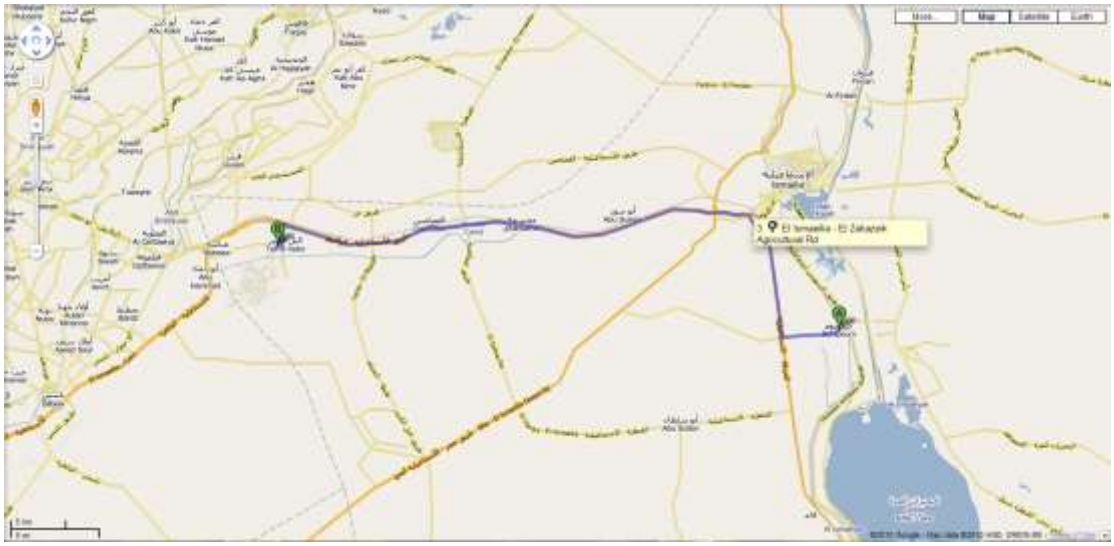
It rained a little and we moved down the canal to 'Serapeum' where 2 other Companies of the 29th Battalion were.

A - Ismailia, Ismailia, Egypt. B - Serapeum, Al Isma'iliyah, Egypt.

We had 13 men in a tent there but we were happy enough. We did a lot of hard training here, and we had many sham attacks over the sand. We could fall and roll about in it without hurting ourselves. We were here till 24th February and it rained a couple of times though not heavy.

24th February 1915

We had reveille about 5am and struck camp and marched to Serapeum station and entrained for 'Tell el-Kebir'.



A – Serapeum, Ismailia, Egypt. B - Tel el-Kebir.

The camp there held 30,000 men at that time, and it had good roads and a good water supply. The food was also much better. The bread was particularly good and was all baked at the camp bakery, some 15,000 loaves a day were disposed of.

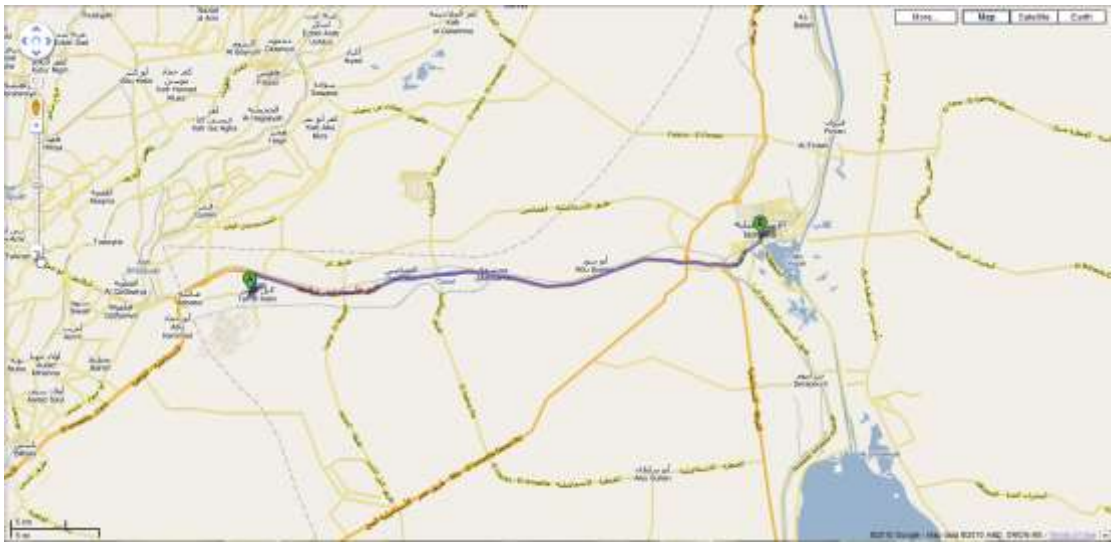
[5]While at this camp I went through a course of instructing in bombing. The country was just a barren waste but not very sandy compared with the sandy desert along the canal (see pic).

Men of the 29th Battalion digging trenches at Tel el Kebir.

There was a sweet water canal running not far from the camp, which came from the Nile. There were a lot of shops and eating houses in the camp mostly run by Egyptians. A leave train ran every day from Tel el-Kebir to Cairo but I didn't manage to get leave as we left before my turn came around.

23rd March 1915

We entrained about 8pm for 'Ferry Post' on the canal and opposite Ismalia.



A - Tel el-Kebir. B – Ismalia, Egypt.

We got to the detraining point early on the morning of 24th and after a couple of hours wait we moved off along a beautiful road which had trees meeting over head along part of it. About this time the 3 other Brigades of our Division set out to march from Tel el-Kebir to Ismalia. They got lost in the desert and had a terrible time and some died of thirst. We had very large and heavy packs on our march from the train to Ferry Post and many fell out exhausted. When we did arrive at the camp, which was three quarters of a mile from the canal we had to erect tents. Then we had dinner and afterwards did as we wished. Most of us went swimming. It was like being at some seaside resort to see hundreds of men along the banks of the canal. Most of us wore no bathing attire at all. Of course if a passenger boat came along we'd either partly dress or remain in the water. Many men learned to swim here who couldn't before. The water was quite warm and I almost lived in it when off parade.

29th March 1915

We marched to a camp about 10 miles out in the desert and called 'Brighton Beach' and the only way it resembled Brighton was in the sand. For as far as you could see in all directions it was all sand hills and not a solitary tree anywhere. We simply lay down under a blanket spread over four rifles which, with bayonets fixed, were struck upright in the sand. Oh it was an awful day, and we had very little water, and what we had got, too warm to be of any use. One of the Officers who left his bottle in the sun found it uncomfortably hot on his hand. We took most of our clothes off, in fact, all but our trousers. Towards evening the camels arrived with water and we each got one bottle full, but most of us could have drunk that in one go. We only got one bottle per day during the time we were here.

We erected tents after sundown and we were better off from then onwards. While here we experienced the worst sand storm I've ever seen or heard of. We went out rifle shooting and the wind began to blow and got stronger till the sand began to lift a bit. As it got worse and worse our Captain marched us back to camp and we just got there in time. The wind increased until the air was full of flying sand and it was utterly impossible to face it. The air was like a yellow wall while the gale was at its height and when it abated in the evening, the whole aspect of the desert was changed. Where there had been sand hills before was levelled and where any trenches or depressions were, were blotted out. While the storm was on we could neither see the sky or sun. One large sand hill known as Hoggs Back had the top blown entirely off it and left an observation post made of timber exposed. The storm lasted 8 hours during which time we were confined to our tents.

In the evening they called for volunteers to go and rescue an aeroplane which had been forced to land in the desert, and of course lots were forthcoming and the plane was dragged into camp in no time. That was first close view of a plane and we were all very interested in it. Early next morning a breakdown lorry arrived from the aerodrome which was near Ismalia. One good thing we had at Brighton beach was a very good canteen though for that matter we seemed always to have good canteens in Egypt.

15th April 1915

We marched back to Ferry Post and very glad we all were too. The weather was now very hot and I spent every spare minute in the canal. On account of the heat we did nothing between 10am and 4pm. Reveille was 4am and drill from 6 to 10am. We had the usual mess huts made of a mat covered framework and as cool as a place could be in the heat. Our tents were made with a sort of sunshade inner tent (a sort of tent within a tent and they were much cooler on that account).

At 4pm each day we fell in and either had a swimming parade or a lecture till about 5:30. The temperature stood at over 100 degrees (Fahrenheit) every day and some days up to 120.

On 25th April 1915

[6]**W**e celebrated 'Anzac Day' by having Church Parade and sports. Some of us were sent to a bombing school and were camped right on the canal bank for the eight days we were in it.

16th May 1915

One Company of us moved to a small post about 2 miles up the canal. It was called 'Bench Mark'. Our tent was only about 15 ft from the water and every morning I used to hop out of bed and dive in, and it was great.

The heat was intense at midday and the wind seemed like a breath from a furnace. The temperature went up to 124 in the shade. We just lay in our tents and some drank beer and others ate fruit, which was brought by camels from Ismalia. We saw some of the Australian mail boats pass up the canal while we were here.

Our duties here were not very numerous, and chiefly consisted of patrols and sentry post. There was one patrol by day, which was to go with an Indian and a camel for some distance along the canal. He rode one way and we the other. I only went once though and that's the only time I've ridden a camel. They are very rough animals to ride, but still better than walking through the eternal sand.

The flies were something terrible here and I have never seen anything before or since like it. If you had a piece of bread and jam you had constantly to keep it on the move or it would be black with them and to leave your tea exposed for half a minute was to have at least half a dozen flies in it. We couldn't afford to throw tea away because flies got into it – drink was too scarce for that. The thought of it now is enough to make me feel sick but somehow we were not at all squeamish.

22nd May 1915

We marched back to Ferry Post where we stayed six days and didn't do too much.

28th May 1915

We marched to 'Moascar' near Ismalia and were camped in tents. One chap in my tent got some complaint or other and we were isolated. Our tent was shifted out into the

desert about 200 yards from any other and we were there some days. We had nothing to do so spent most of our time reading and occasionally went for a walk across the desert. We frequently saw the 'mirage' across the desert. Anyone would have sworn there was a lake there but there wasn't.

15th June 1915

About 9pm we entrained for 'Alexandria'[7] in open trucks and were packed worse than sardines.

A – Ismalia. B - Alexandria, Egypt.

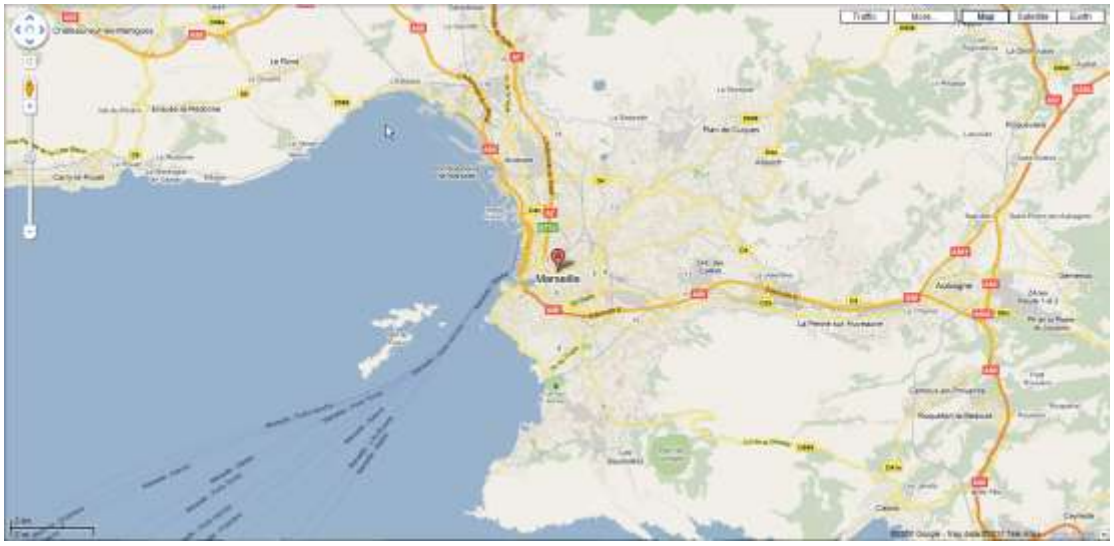
I lay down for a while and I don't know how many feet were over mine and mine were over someone else's. I soon tired of that and stood up for the rest of the seven hours journey. We saw the niggers working in the fields at 1am; I suppose it was too hot to work by day.

The train took us right on to the wharf, and we detrained and were on the *S S Tunisian* in a couple of hours. We were all glad to be leaving Egypt for France. We called Egypt the land of sin, sand, sore eyes and sorrow and that is about what it is too. The '*Tunisian*' was a slow boat but we were not troubled with submarines, and so had a pleasant enough voyage of six days to Marseilles. We saw islands on various occasions and as we neared France it got much cooler.

A - Alexandria, Egypt. B - Marseilles, France

23rd June 1916 – Marseilles, France

We disembarked about 8pm and marched to a station and had to wait till after midnight before entraining.



When we did entrain I was one of the party to occupy a cattle truck, and we thought ourselves very badly off. But before the end of the journey we had reason to think otherwise. The train started about 1am on 24th and when we could see next morning, we found we were travelling through a most beautiful green countryside. It was like paradise after the deserts of Egypt.

I enjoyed the 54-hour journey very much in spite of living on bully beef and biscuits. I slept well for two of the three nights we were on the trip. We had 25 men in a truck and by a bit of organising we could all like down, full stretch, whereas men in the carriages could not.

We passed through Versailles which is a classy suburb of Paris. We received everywhere a great ovation from the French inhabitants.

26th June 1916 – Hazebrouck

We arrived at 'Hazebrouck' and detrained at 10am in the rain and after a march of 2 kilometres we were put into billets in a barn. It was comfortable enough but dark even by day and we had to climb a ladder to a loft in which some of us were.

Of course almost every place was 'out of bounds' but that didn't stop us going to some of the places. Hazebrouck was a decent sized place and there was a small village called 'Morbecque' which was in bounds. While here we were trained in the use of the gas helmet and did a bit of drill and route marches.

8th July 1916 Estaires

8th July. We left Hazebrouck per boot, and on a cobbled road, and marched 17 miles with a pack and blanket.

Nearly every man fell out before it was over. I lasted until within a mile of the end and by that time my feet were too sore to keep up. However, I kept on and was only a few minutes after those who got there first – some men didn't arrive until all sorts of hours through the night. Our billet was a farmhouse on the outskirts of 'Estaires'. I was too tired to do anything, even to lie down comfortably. After a bit I got a feed of eggs and a drink of nice coffee from the madam at the farm and that made me feel much better. I slept well that night and next day we had another 10 miles to do but no one fell out on that.

9th July 1916 – Erquinghem-le-Sec

We finished up at a village called "Erquinghem'[8] and were then only 5 miles from the front line. Some of the heavy guns were not far from the village.

10th July, 1916 – Bois Grenier

We were ordered to the front line. It was exactly a year from the day I enlisted. Everyone was talking at once over it, and great excitement generally.

We moved off at dusk and after passing through several more or less ruined villages we got into a communication trench about 10pm and had an uneventful trip into the line. The Hun fired some machine guns over the trench causing us to keep very low. We got into the front line about midnight. Things were quiet except for an occasional burst of machine gun fire over our parapet. The portion of line we held was at 'Bois Grenier'. The trenches here were all of the 'built up' variety, i.e. they were made of sand bags, which were several feet above the level of the ground. If they had been dug into the ground they'd have been too wet and liable to be flooded.

11th July, 1916

We had our first experience of shellfire this morning, but I wasn't particularly afraid of it because I didn't know the terrible danger of shells then. They all missed us, but the Company on our right had their first casualties. Fritz also used some trench mortar bombs on our line and several were rather too close to us.

Next evening two of us went out on listening post. We had to crawl out under our own wire to a small horseshoe shaped trench about one third of the way across No Man's Land. We were somewhat nervous at first but soon got used to being there and we didn't fire any false alarms, but we were not sorry when the time came to go in again. We were four days in the line here and were then relieved by New Zealand troops and we marched back about 2 miles. It was just daybreak when we got to a large barn which was our billet and we slept till noon. We spent the following night here and then went to billets further back still.

19th July, 1916 - Fromelles

On the evenings of July 19th our Division was to hop the bags at 'Fromelles'. Accordingly our artillery opened a heavy bombardment at 1pm on that date. The 29th Battalion were in reserve to the 8th Brigade. At 6pm a mine was blown under the enemy wire and over the boys went, but from the start the operation was doomed to failure. For a start the Hun must have known it was coming off and was ready. Our bombardment had not hurt many of his machine guns apparently for they opened up a terrific fire and most of the Division didn't get over at all. On the right of the attacking troops there was a 600 yard No Man's Land and they had no hope at all there. Where our Brigade was No Man's Land was only a little over 100 yards and our chaps took and held the Hun line for 11 hours but were then forced to retire. The casualties were exceedingly heavy. Our Battalion were ordered up on fatigue in the early part of the night. We had to carry picks, shovels and bombs[9] to the front line, all of which should have been there long before. The organisation of the whole affair was rotten. It took us 2 hours to get to the front line along the communication trench, which was choked with men coming out, and with stretcher-bearers and the trench was only about 1,200 yards long. When we did get there no one seemed to know anything about who was in command so we made a dump and went back for more. Another chap and I carried a box of ammunition this time and when we got to the line it was daylight. Then someone sent word that the Hun was in our front line, but it turned out to be a yarn. If the Hun had come over he would have had an easy win I think.

Our Company Commander was great that morning, so also was an Officer from a British Regiment who were on our left.

One of my best mates was killed on the morning of the 20th and that hurt me more than anything else. The Division suffered some 7,000 casualties in that operation and it was the first stint of the Australians in France, but it was no fault of the men that it was a failure.

20th July 1916

Our Battalion took over the front line but it got very quiet after the stint and was quite a home. We stayed there till 25th and then went back to the support line from which we went on fatigue to the front line every afternoon or else on listening post at night. I was on permanent listening post.

31st July 1916

We went back to billets 2 ½ miles in rear. After 9 days there I went with 6 other chaps to guard and look after a bomb dump. It was one of the best jobs I've ever had in the Army. We had two cushy dugouts with pictures on the walls and roofs, and one post for six of us to do, so we were not overworked. I was cook most of the time and we lived like lords and we could go to the canteen and buy stuff besides our rations, which were good and plentiful. Our only trouble was rats and they were numerous. I dug 27 out of their burrows in 2 days. They would eat anything and even ate or chewed our soap. One chap left his 'puttees' (a gaiter or legging of leather or other material, worn from ankle to knee for support) out one night and next morning he found a rat had eaten the tapes off and taken them away to make a nest I suppose.

27th September 1916 - Armentières

We were relieved from the bomb guard and rejoined our Battalion and we got buses to 'Armentières'.

We were billeted in the one time hospital for the first night, but the city had been badly mauled in parts and the hospital had been hit by several shells. But considering the fact that the front line was only about 2 miles away, the town had come off very lightly at that time. Quite a number of civilians were there and there were plenty of shops still open. We only stayed the one night at the hospital and the next day shifted to a rope works. There was a nice large yard surrounded by a brick wall to keep us in. The town was out of bounds except for 2 hours per day and we had to have a pass even for that time.

About this time we were issued with the new box respirator, which was a vast improvement on the old cloth helmet.

28th September 1916

We went back to the reserve line or a 1,000-yard line as it was called. I felt rotten for a couple of days and couldn't eat. It was very quiet.

6th October 1916 - Armentières

A party of us went on fatigue for the Engineers. We were billeted in 'Armentières' in a factory. From there we went to the line every day and had to work from 8am till 12 noon. We were mostly clearing drains and repairing trenches. We had the free run of the town once we got back to our billet, which was about 1pm.

The Hun used to throw some shells into the town sometimes in an evening and you'd see people scattering in all directions to cellars. We were going along a street and a shell landed on a roof about 50 yards in front of us, and most of the tiles fell into the street amid clouds of red dust. We turned and made off in another direction and had only gone a little way when we saw a house on fire, so we helped the firemen run out the hose. The fire was in a building at the rear of a 2-storey place and the hose was run up the staircase of the latter. There was a French lady and her daughter living in the house and they were as cool as could be in spite of the knowledge that their house was in imminent danger of being burnt. However, the fire was well under control in about an hour.

The Hun made a special target of one of the fine churches of the town and almost completely wrecked it. I was in one church one evening while the Hun shells were passing right over it. There was a service on but the people took no notice of shells – I suppose they had got more or less used to them though a person can never quite get used to shellfire.

13th October 1916

We went into the line and rejoined our Company and had a quiet night.

14th October 1916 - Strazeele

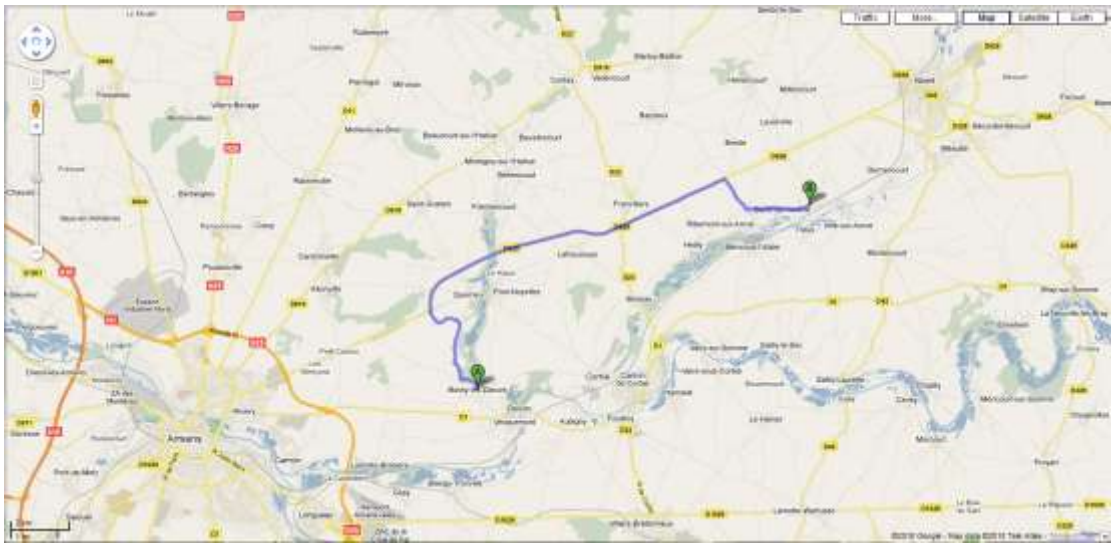
[10]We marched out to 'Armentières' and got buses to the village of 'Strazeele' near 'Baillieul' and entrained for the Somme Front. The train left about 1:30am on 17th and arrived at 'Longpre' at 4pm.

A – Strazeele, B - Longpré, Amiens, C - Bussy-lès-Daours. D - Buire-sur-l'Ancre, Somme, Picardy, France

We then set out to march about a couple of miles as we thought but it turned out to be nearer 10 than 2 and we'd had no hot meal and it began to rain. Before long we were all fed up and we were only looking for a place to fall out and stay for the night. A lot did fall out and sleep under haystacks and any old sheds they could find and got to the village of 'Bussy' (Bussy-lès-Daours) next morning. We got there at 11pm and got a feed of the inevitable stew, but it was very welcome.

20th October 1916 - Buire-sur-l'Ancre

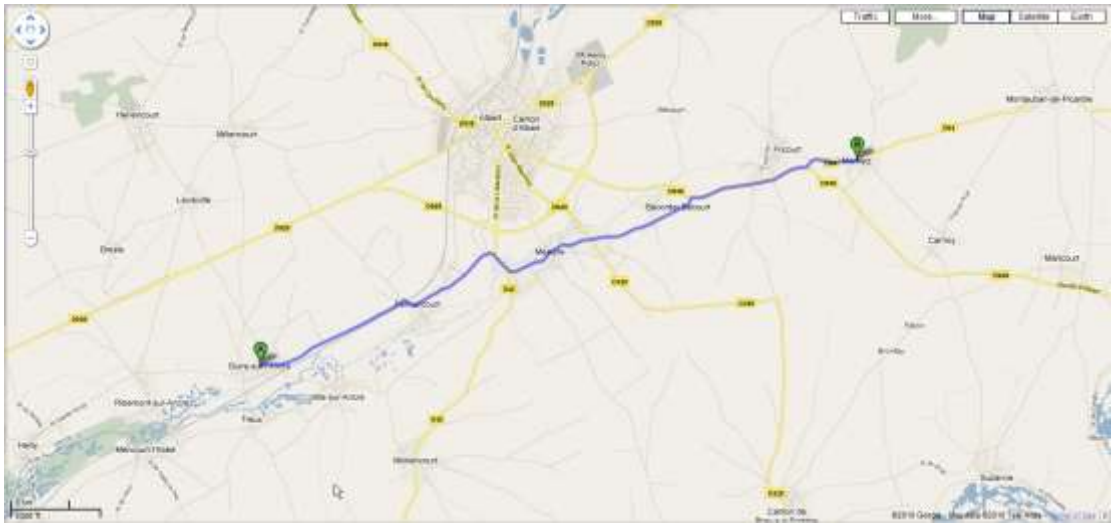
[10]We marched about 2 miles then got buses to 'Buire' (I believe this to be Buire-sur-l'Ancre, Somme, Picardy, France – Phil Cleary) a village about 4 miles from Albert.



A - Longpré, Amiens, France. B - Buire-sur-l'Ancre, Somme, Picardy

We found the Somme villages much more miserable looking than the Flanders villages. The former are mostly made of mud with thatched roofs and the streets were very dirty and muddy. There seemed an altogether miserable sort of look about them. There were only very old and very young people living in them too as all the rest were on war work or soldiering. We had a beastly cold billet for the first night we stayed at 'Buire'. We were glad the first night was the last for we moved on again next morning towards the front. We could hear the guns and they sounded much louder than we'd ever heard them before.

[10]We arrived at a place on a hillside near 'Mametz Wood' after a few hours marching and had to make ourselves as comfortable as possible under little shelters made of trench covers.



A - Buire-sur-l'Ancre, Somme, Picardy, France. B - Mametz

(See also http://www.ww1westernfront.gov.au/mametz/mametz.html)

This was the start of the most miserable three months I've experienced. That never to be forgotten terrible winter which I look back on as if it was all an awful nightmare.

The encampment was about 4 miles from the line, and we now began to realise what war meant. Everything was blown away even the woods were mere skeletons of their former selves. Every inch of the ground had been turned up by shell fire and all the villages were wiped out entirely, not so much as a piece of wall remaining in most instances. One of the very few things I saw undamaged was an iron Crucifix and indeed I've noticed how seldom a Crucifix gets hurt even when all else has been blown away. This particular one was standing by a road and every bit of earth about it had been turned over, yet it was only bent over a little by the shell blasts.

22nd October 1916 - Flers

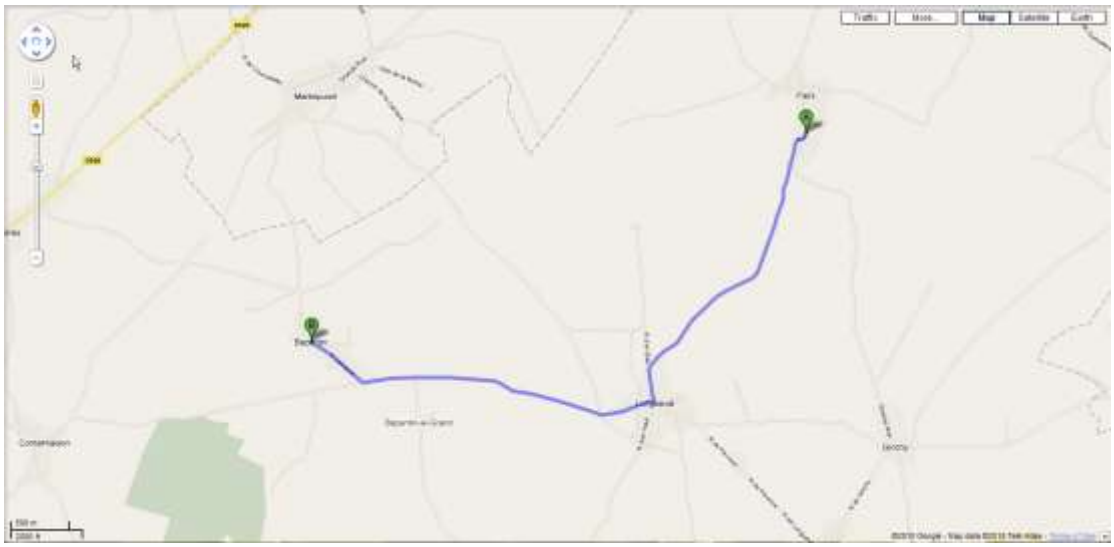
[52] We moved to the support line at 'Flers'. Before we got there we found that things were very different here to what they were on the Northern part and very muddy.

A – Mametz. B – Flers (Rue Principale, 80360 Flers, Somme, Picardie, France)

The trench leading to the line was called 'Fish Alley' and a man wanted webbed feet at least to get along it. There were a great many signal wires along it and we kept getting tangled up in them. As we neared the line the mud got knee deep and very sticky. The Hun was shelling too. The support line was just an open trench with no shelters and it began to rain so we were feeling rather miserable before very long. We stayed 2 days in this trench and the Hun shelled a lot, so we had a few casualties.

From there we went back to the 3,000 yard or reserve line and found that an even worse place than the supports. Many parts were half full of water and the trench leading to it was like a stream. It was called 'Turk Lane' but it was seldom used as most of us preferred to chance the shells by walking along the top. We got shelled, but were lucky and had very few casualties. There were more men going out sick than wounded. I spent two nights in a tiny shelter I dug into the bank of the trench and of course, I shivered all night long. Here we were only about 500 yards from 'High Wood'.

From here we went back to a place called 'Bazentin' and were told to make ourselves comfortable.

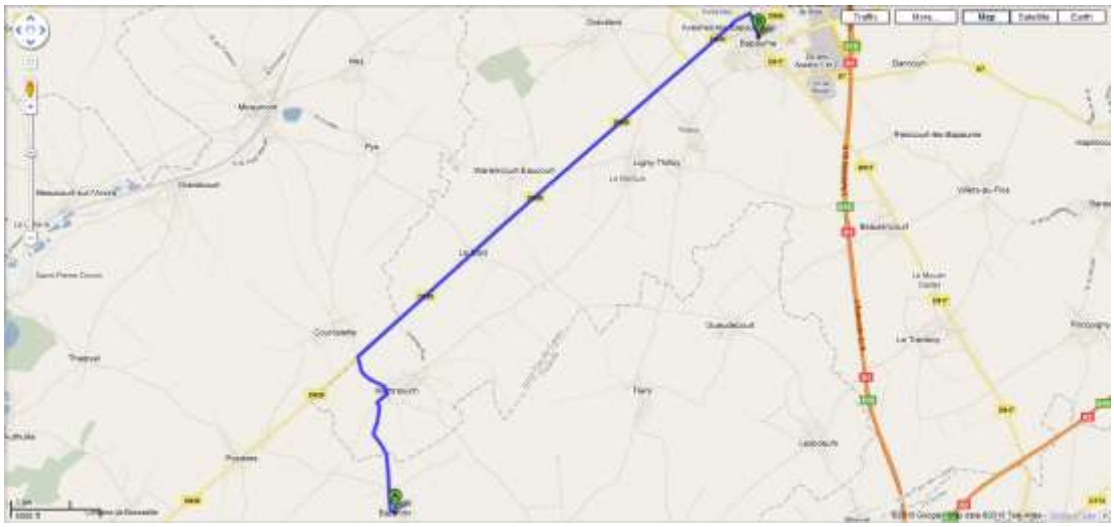


A – Flers (Rue Principale, 80360 Flers, Somme, Picardie, France). B - Bazentin

Then we looked at each other in dismay for where we were, was at least 6 inches deep in mud. However, we had to scrape the mud off and dig about a foot into the soil below. Over that we spread our water proof sheets and so made a sort of shelter. We lived there for the next five days. While on fatigue one day it rained heavily and most of the men got flooded out, some dugouts being full of water when the owners returned. As luck would have it ours was only somewhat wet, but not flooded. One chap who thought he had a cushy little dugout found it full of water, with his stuff floating about in it. The expression on his face would have made a cat laugh and of course we laughed and he then said "some of you fellows would laugh at a man's downfall" – well, that made us laugh more than ever, it was more the tone he said it in than the actual words. We've often recalled that incident since and laughed over it.

31st October 1916 - Bapaume

We moved up to the support line in front of 'Bapaume'.



A - Bazentin, France. B - Bapaume, France

Another chap and I got a decent little dugout here, but it was facing the Hun, so a shell might have come right in, but if one had, we'd have known very little about it so we used to console ourselves that way. Some landed very close, and one night we were awakened to feel the ground rocking under the terrific impact of a large dud shell. It had only gone over our dugout by about 20 feet. The trench was in a nasty position just in front of a howitzer battery, which the Hun used to pay close attention to, and so we got any that fell short. There was also and 18lb battery in front of us which was often shelled.

We spent 4 days here and then a party of us were sent on fatigue to 'Longueval' for the Royal Garrison Artillery.

A - Bapaume B - Longueval

We had to load and unload 8 inch and 9.2 shells. The tramway down to the guns was mostly down hill or level or we'd have had much harder work. One load of shells bolted down the incline one day and went at a terrific pace. It somehow kept on the rails, and we saw it coming towards our truck as it if were electrified. Shells are not dangerous until the nose cap is in them so these didn't go off. The nose cap is put in just before they are to be fired and not too many are capped at once, in case of accidents. Small shells are not left till just before being fired, but have a safety arrangement over the nose cap, which can be quickly removed. We were on this job for some days and a miserable time we had too as it rained a great deal and the mud was in some places over a foot deep between the rails.

7th November 1916 - Fricourt

We left 'Longueval' at 9pm in the rain and set out to march for 'Fricourt'.

I'll never forget that terrible march. Many parts of the road had over a foot of sloppy mud over it and there was no way but through it. It rained very heavily and we got wet through. We arrived at 'Fricourt' feeling life wasn't worth living. We were put into huts at 1am and lay down to get what rest we could till morning. We then had another 10 miles to do to 'Méricourt'.

Our feet were sore on account of the mud getting into our boots but we somehow got to our destination feeling sick, sore and sorry. We had not had a wash for 3 weeks nor a shave, and were covered with that lovely mud of the Somme which sticketh closer than a brother. We looked as bad as we felt too.

We got buses from 'Méricourt,' to Vignacourt about 30 kilos.

A - 'Méricourt'. B – Vignacourt

When we got here we found we'd a decent billet with plenty of straw to sleep on. It was by far the best billet or bed I had seen since leaving the north and was like a palace after the last 3 weeks we'd lived through.

'Vignacourt' was a decent sized town and we were able to get some good feeds of eggs and meat there.

18th November 1916 - Ribemont

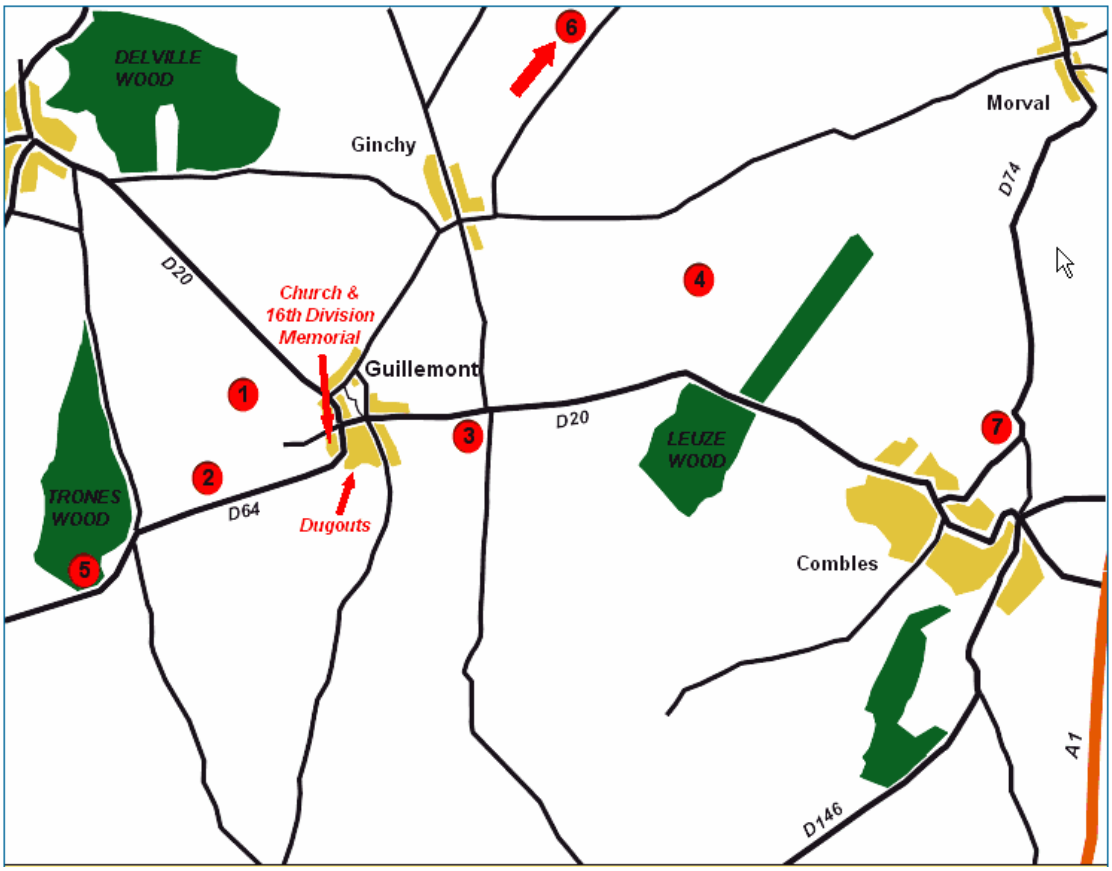
It snowed last night and this morning we got buses and went to 'Ribemont' some distance nearer the front.

A – Vignacourt. B - Ribemont'

We had a stable for a billet and the smell was not exactly nice.

20th November 1916 – Mametz Wood Camp

We marched to 'Mametz Wood Camp' and next day to a camp near 'Trones Wood' near 'Guillemont'.



We did several duck board carrying fatigues from here. We just got in front of our heavy guns one night when they opened up a heavy barrage on Fritz and the noise was like nothing I'd ever heard before. It is beyond description and I would have given anything to get out of it but there was no danger, as the Hun wasn't shelling at all. Just noise and it was terrifying in its intensity. We got lost in a sudden fog on our way back but found ourselves after a couple of hours wandering about and falling into trenches and shell holes. Of course, we were not saying a word!! It was one of the times a chap has to say things or bust.

23 November 1916 - Ginchy

We went into the reserve line at or near 'Ginchy'.

A – Guillemont. B – Ginchy

The trench was called 'Windmill Trench' and was fairly deep and dry when we first entered it but it soon began to rain and the sides of the trench began to slide in and all our little dugouts fell in. By the end of the second day our condition was miserable in the extreme. We only had a trench half full of mud to live in and parts of that mud were 3 feet deep and very sloppy. To make matters worse the Hun began to shell us and got the range to a nicety. We had 23 serious casualties before that day was done. One shell just about filled the dixie (an iron pot or mess tin) of rum with mud (and no one murmured).

Feelings were beyond words for a while. While a party of us were trying to eat a bit of bread and bacon (and mud) a shell landed in our midst but somehow no one was seriously hurt. We found that the shell had gone right into the ground and burst there and so the soft earth had saved us, without a doubt. I had a little place to sit up at night and my feet and legs dangling in water and mud. I was badly frightened there by shell fire, for the first time to feel real deadly fear but we had to make the best of it and stay there till relieved.

November 27th 1916 – Adelaide Camp

Got relieved and marched back to 'Adelaide Camp', 'Montauban'.

A – Ginchy. B – Montauban (Montauban-de-Picardie), France.

The huts were alright but the track into them was appalling, it was like an ocean of mud round the camp. The trek into the camp was so bad that men had to be placed at intervals along it as guides, for to get off the track at all was to get bogged in the mud.

December 1st 1916

We were only at this camp for 2 days and then went into the reserve line again and on December 1st went to front line. We had about a mile to go or perhaps a little more and we got to a sunken road about 500 yards short of the line when the Hun opened a terrific barrage about 250 yards in front of us. Our Officer got orders to remain in the road and it is as well we did or there would have been numerous casualties. One Coy. Commander took his Company on without waiting and thereby lost some men. After things got a bit quieter we moved on and only had a couple of men wounded.

We had to cross a place called 'Lark Hill' and you could follow the track by the dead that were all along it, and it was a very hot place. The Hun shelled us all the time practically for the 4 days we were there, but he mostly landed them just over us by a few yards. It was very cold while here, the banks of the trench being coated with frost and ice. However, we managed to make a hot drink of tea with the aid of a Tommy Cooker. We left this place on evening of 4th December and went back to 'Windmill' trench for the night and next day.

5th December 1916

We moved back to 'Trones Wood' to tents and other shelters for one night, and next day we went to good huts where we stayed till 8th December. We did nothing much while out and the whole place was in a terrible state of mud excepting where they had duckboard tracks laid.

8th December 1916

We went into reserve line for the night as reserve for 32nd Battalion while they did a raid.

9th December 1916

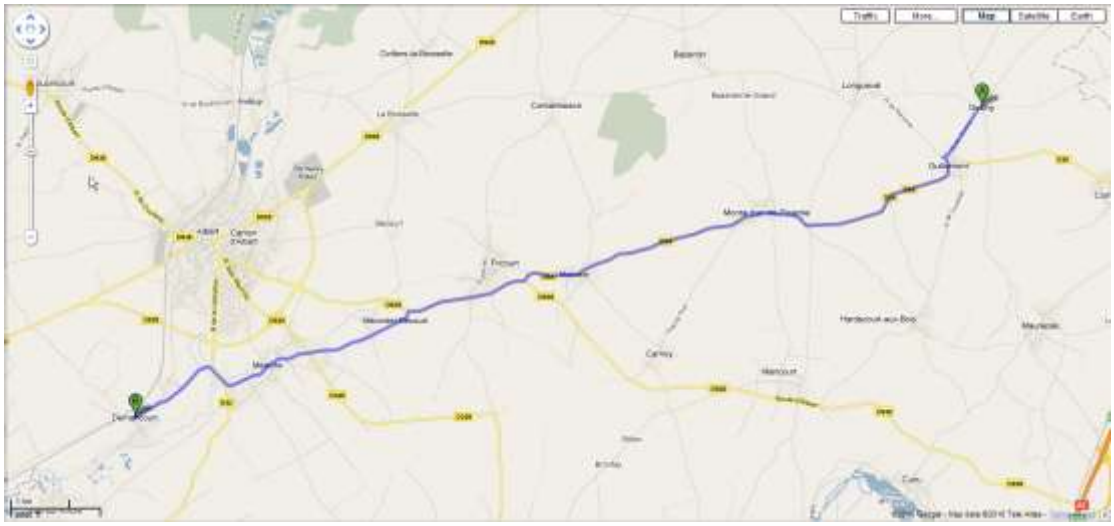
We marched out to 'Trones Wood' again to huts.

10th December 1916

We marched to 'Montauban' to Adelaide Camp which by now was fitted with duckboard walks and was much better than on our previous stay here. We spent 10 days here, at which time we were road making and scraping mud and snow off the roads. Tucker (food) was very poor here at this time, each man was allowed a third of a loaf of bread a day and out of that he would have to take his midday meal and all we'd have for breakfast was a small piece of boiled bacon and about every second day porridge. For tea at night we'd have stew. At midday we used to get a drink of cocoa from the Australian Comforts fund and also could get pork and beans which a lot of men don't like, but at that time I used to eat a tin myself, cold as they were.

20th December 1916 - Dernancourt

[12] We entrained and went to 'Dernancourt' about 3 miles from 'Albert'.



A – Ginchy. B - Dernancourt

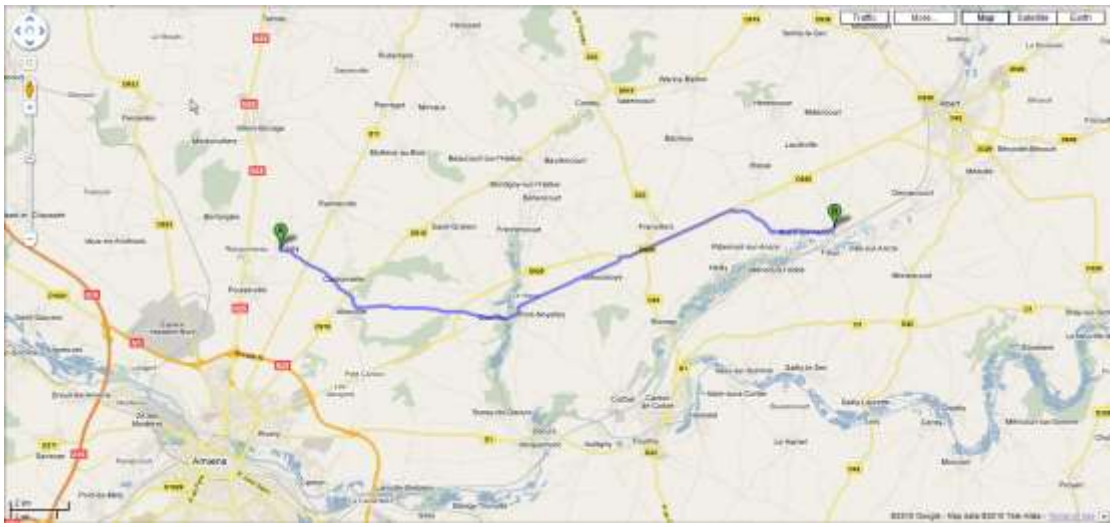
We had a very draughty billet, but managed to always have a fire of coal or coke (the solid product resulting from the distillation of coal in an oven) and on this we used to make porridge and fry meat etc. that we bought from the French. 'Dernancourt' was a dirty miserable place and we spent Xmas and New Year there. Didn't have anything special for Xmas either so it didn't seem like Xmas at all. However, I suppose we ought to have reckoned ourselves lucky to be out of the line.

3rd January 1917 - La Houssoye

[13]. We left 'Dernancourt' and marched to 'La Houssoye' on the main 'Albert, Amiens' road and next day marched to 'Coisy' a miserable village near 'Amiens'.

A – Dernancourt. B - La Houssoye. C - Coisy

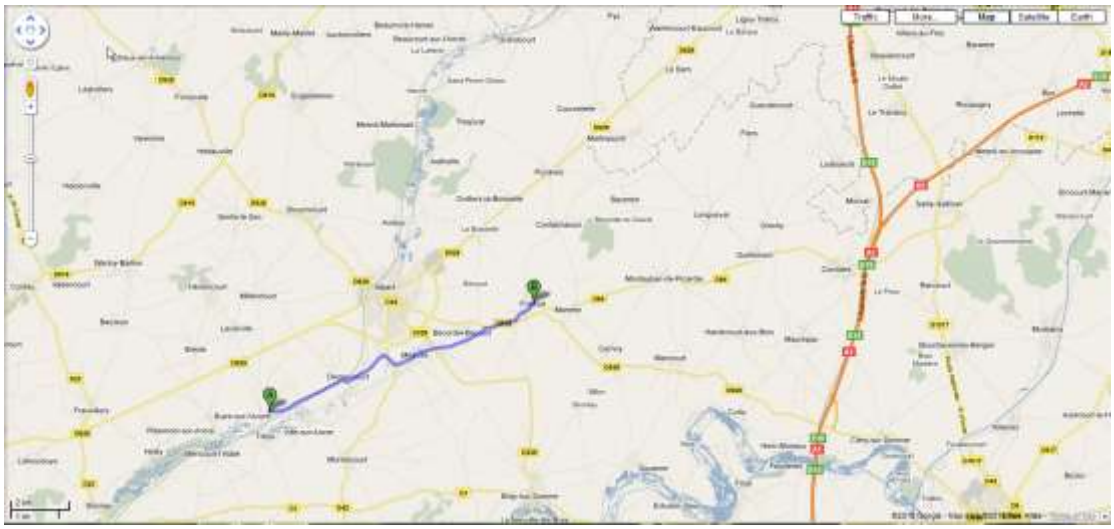
It would not have been too bad if leave had been granted to 'Amiens' but of course it wasn't. We had 6 days spell at 'Coisy' which consisted of plenty of drill and route marches as spells in the army often do. On January 10th we marched to 'Buire' and stayed the night but had a much better billet than on the previous occasion we were there.



A – Coisy. B - Buire

11th January 1917

[13]We marched to a camp at 'Fricourt' and next day to 'Montauban' where we again went on road fatigue.



A – Buire. B - Fricourt

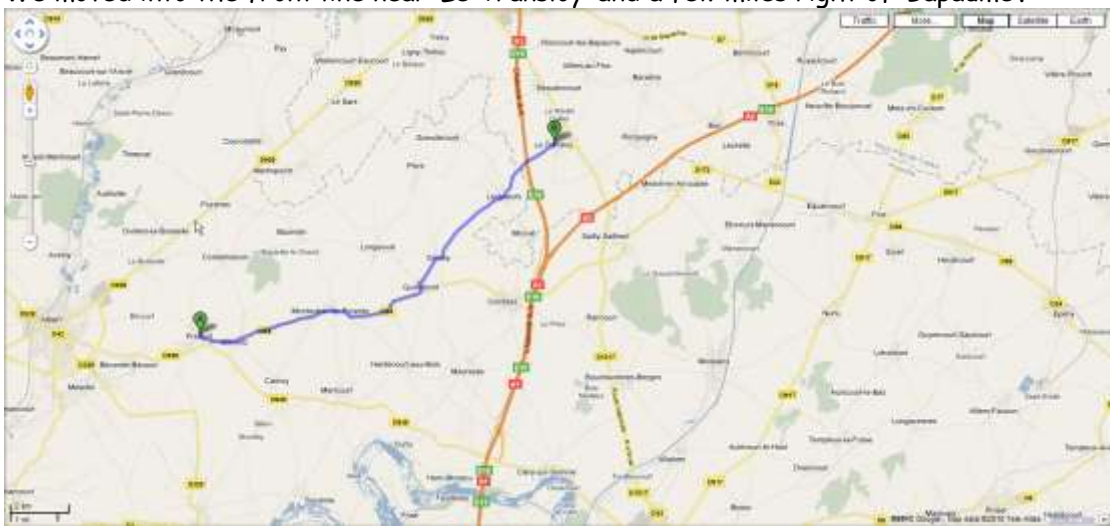
The cold now was intense and everything was frozen. Where there was a sea of mud before was now as hard as rocks. The mud was frozen so hard that we had to use picks to break it up with. We did 12 days of this during which it snowed a lot, but it was too cold for it to melt so we didn't get wet or anything.

24th January 1917

[13]. We went into the reserve line and were in the trench called Needle Trench near Needle Dump and not far from our old position 'Windmill Trench'. There was at this time 8 inches of ice on the shell holes and it was very hard to even get a hot drink, which we needed more than anything else.

26th January 1917 – Le Transloy

We moved into the front line near 'Le Transloy' and a few miles right of 'Bapaume'.



A – Fricourt. B – Le Transloy

The cold here was awful, every mortal thing being frozen and the bread as hard as a board. Stew sent up from the cooks arrived in one frozen lump and water the same. The only thing not frozen was rum, and it won't freeze.

27th January 1917

On the morning of the 27th Tommy (English) Division on our immediate right hopped over. Our barrage was a sight and Fritz had the Tommies on him before he knew what had happened. They had a very successful stunt taking numerous prisoners and some machine guns. The Hun artillery started to shell after that and continued all day but they all went just over us or else about 150 yards behind us in a gully so again our luck was in.

About midnight on the 27th I was sent to the right of our position to help hold an advanced bombing post in case of attack. It was intensely cold so I had every available thing on and a blanket thrown loose over me and was walking up and down the bit of trench to keep a little life in my legs and feet. The Hun was shelling with big stuff looking for a trench mortar of ours that was worrying him. I just stopped walking up and down when one shell landed right in the trench where I'd been and a piece blowing back caught me in the leg and another chap got a piece in the chest but neither of us were very seriously injured. I got the full force of the concussion and was knocked senseless for about ½ a minute and thought I was a 'gone-coon' (a person for whom failure is inevitable). My leg was absolutely numb and at first I thought it was broken but feeling slowly returned and when my gumboot was taken off it was seen that I had a small wound just over the right anklebone. It was a beaut Blighty (a wound serious enough to get a soldier back to England) and once I got away I was as pleased as punch with it. It was great to get into a decent warm place such as the advanced dressing station was and get a hot drink and a bit of sleep before I was taken on to the next post back and so on until I eventually arrived on the road at 'Delville Wood' and got the horse ambulance to the Field Ambulance where I was sent on by train to Albert and from there by car to the Casualty Clearing Station at Edge Hill near 'Dernancourt'.

28th January 1917

I was operated on about 5pm on the 28th and the piece of shell taken out and woke to find myself in a bed. It was heavenly after the bitter cold and misery of the last week or so. I was very hungry when I woke, as it was over 24 hours since I had a bite to eat, but the nurse only gave me a cup of milk and then I slept. Oh! How I slept between the white sheets.

30th January 1917

I was sent by Red Cross train to Rouen (8th General Hospital) and the next day was marked for Blighty.

1st February 1917

1st February. I went to Havre by Hospital Train and was put on board the Hospital Ship '*Werildd* (later torpedoed in August 1918). We lay in harbour till 5th and then sailed and landed at 'Southampton' about dusk. We were then put on a hospital train, which was so beautiful and comfortable, and I shall never forget how perfect everything seemed after the last few months. The beautiful fast train and the knowledge that at last I was in Blighty was enough to make anyone as happy as a King. I was happier than that though. After a 6 hours run we got to Norwich in Norfolk and were conveyed to the Norfolk War Hospital at 'Thorpe' about 3 miles from Norwich. At one time it had been the Norfolk County Asylum and was a fine place. I only stayed in bed about 2 days and was marked 'up' and when I got crutches I got about a bit, though at first the leg gave me some pain. I had a lovely time here till 9th March. I used to read a lot and also play bagatelle (a game on a board having at one end holes into which balls are struck with a cue) a great deal and after I could walk I went into Norwich several times to concerts and picture shows which were all free to men in blue. There was snow on the ground all the time I was there, so it was somewhat cold out.

9th March 1917

I was sent to 'Dartford' Convalescent Hospital for Australians only, though I prefer a hospital where there were troops from all parts of the Empire. I was here 8 days. It was a quiet place and wasn't at all crowded and seemed dull after the big hospital, but looking back on it now it was a great place and there was any amount of reading of all kinds and plenty of Australian magazines and papers and even Australian views on the walls of the reading room. It was very comfortable with all kinds of easy chairs, couches etc.

17th March 1917

I was sent by train to 'Monte Vides' convalescent camp at Weymouth. We were quartered in huts which were warm enough with a fire in them and we each had 4 blankets so weren't badly off. The food was good on the whole and there was plenty of leave into Weymouth which is a very nice place with a lovely promenade along the beach or 'front'. We had nothing to do except a bit of physical jerks each morning.

29th March 1917

I went on furlough (leave of absence from official duty) (14 days) and after getting fixed up in London with cash etc. we went our various ways. I made for King's Cross station intending to proceed to Edinburgh at night but I felt crook so stayed at the YMCA near the station till the next day.

30th March 1917

I went to Hampton Court after I'd had a stroll down the Strand and got a camera and had a look at the 'Tower Bridge'. At 10pm I got the train for Edinburgh and after an uneventful journey arrived at my destination at 7.30am on 31st. A man from 'Ramsay Lodge' (a branch of the Overseas Club) met us at the station and all who wished went with him to the Club. I went with him and after a wash we felt fit for a good feed which we got. It was a very nice place to stay and the tucker was extra good. I visited most of the places worth seeing during the next few days. First I went to see the great 'Forth Bridge' which is the largest bridge I've ever seen and walked across it, 1-½ miles. The highest point of it is over 300 feet above the water. A gang of men are kept busy always repairing it, as by the time one part is done somewhere else wants something doing to it. I also visited Edinburgh Castle and it's very interesting. I got some excellent snaps of parts of it. Another interesting place I visited is Holyrood Palace, at one time the abode of Mary Queen of Scots as was also the Castle. Many of the paintings in the picture gallery of the palace are of very great age. While at Edinburgh the weather was not too pleasant and it snowed heavily at times.

4th April 1917

I went to Glasgow and stayed at the Grand Hotel in which a branch of the Overseas Club had just been opened. It was a far too stylish a place for my fancy though, and the club part hadn't got going properly. I only stayed one day at Glasgow and during that time I visited the Botanical Gardens in which the hot houses were worth seeing and after that went down to the Clyde to see some of the shipping.

5th April 1917

I went back to Edinburgh where I stayed for dinner then got a train for London. I went as far as York on it and changed for a Manchester train and arrived at the latter place about 10pm and went to the YMCA in 'Piccadilly' for the night.

6th April 1917

I went to Withington to an address I had there. I stayed there for the rest of my furlough and had a very good time.

11th April 1917

I went back to London by way of York and Great Northern Railway. I got to King's Cross at 11.30pm and went to the YMCA for the night and next morning got the train for Weymouth and reported back to Monte Vides Camp.

13th April 1917

I was sent to Westham Camp nearer the town. I liked it better than Monte Vides and it wasn't in such an exposed position. The weather now began to clear up and on the 15th April we had the first really spring day. The first after the worst and longest Winter's snow over here for many years. On Anzac Day 25th we had sports in the morning and a grand procession through the town in the afternoon, followed by a free entertainment at the 'Jubilee Hall' St Thomas street.

2nd May 1917

I was sent with a draft to the hardening and Drafting Depot at Perham Downs. We had a very easy time there for 3 weeks and I used to go to the nearby village of 'Ludgershall' very often. There was various means of getting rid of your money there, such as miniature rifle ranges and Hoop-la and many 1d (1 penny) in the slot machines. There were also 2 Cinema Shows and I went to every picture they had while I was there. In fact I saw more movies there in 3 weeks than I'd seen in 3 years before.

27th May 1917

I went on draft to France and it rained some as we were marching from the camp to the station. We detrained at Southampton and boarded the *SS France*. We sailed at 9pm and got to Havre about 3am.

28th May 1917

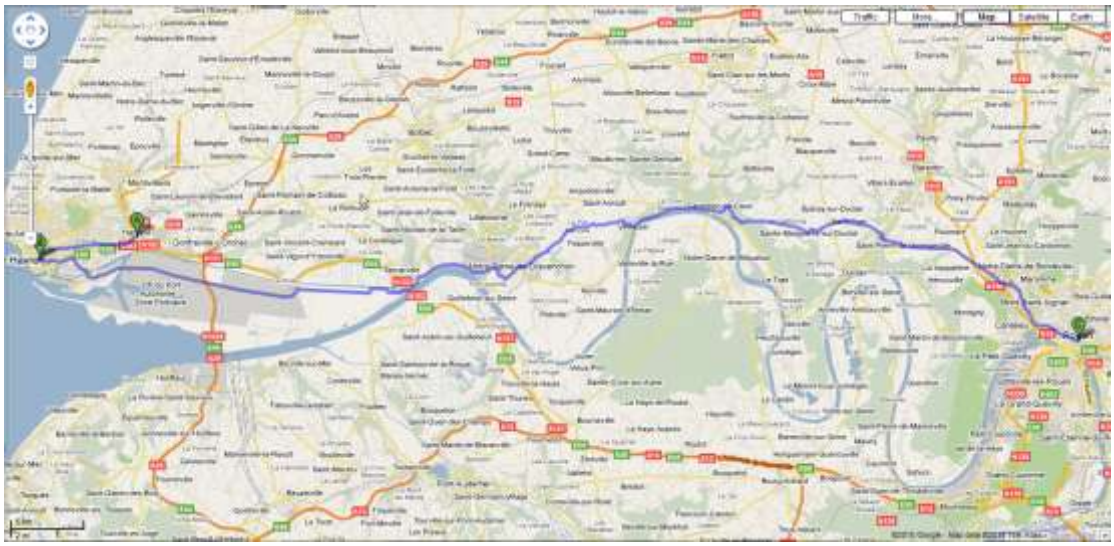
After disembarking we had to march about 6 kilometres to a camp near 'Harfleur'.

A – Havre. B - Harfleur

The first night we had to sleep wherever we could find a place and I slept in a place that was in course of erection. It only had the roof and part of the floor and walls on, but still it kept the rain out. After a few days the men of our Division went to a different camp and there we had decent tents to live in. We had to march about a mile, and every day to the 'Bull Ring' which was a training ground for the troops. It was a very pretty part, all round where our camp was, and being Spring was extra fresh and lovely. What a difference to the bare branches and bitter cold of the Winter. I found it possible to realise that France was after all a lovely place at times, so long as there was no war near you. We had some very violent thunderstorms whilst here and some of the tents flooded, but ours wasn't. We used to feed in large 'dining halls' there that seated 500 men. The food was mostly good too.

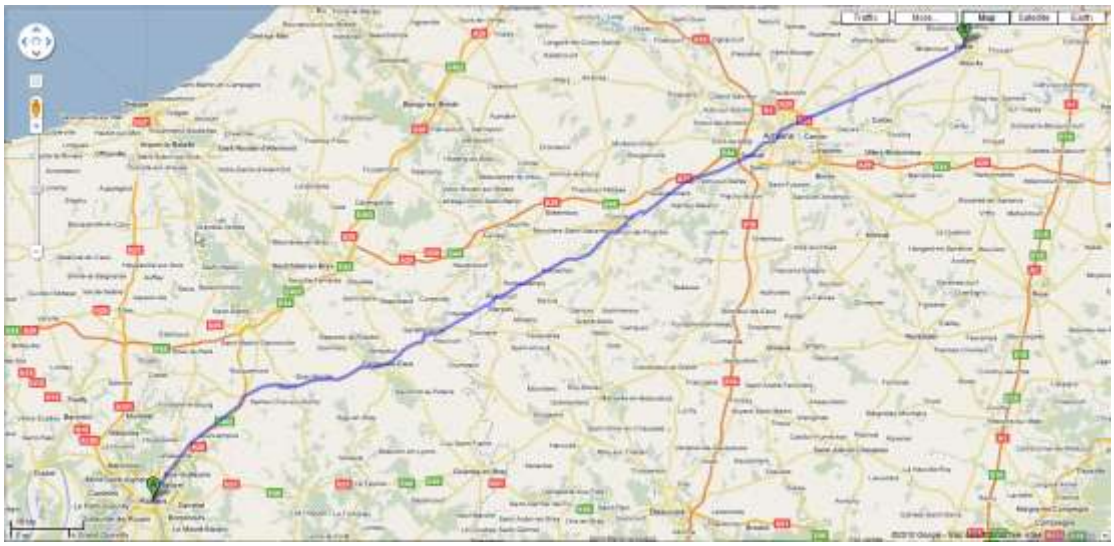
19th June 1917

I was sent on draft to rejoin the Battalion. We marched to Havre in the rain and entrained about 10pm and arrived at 'Rouen' at 7am next morning.



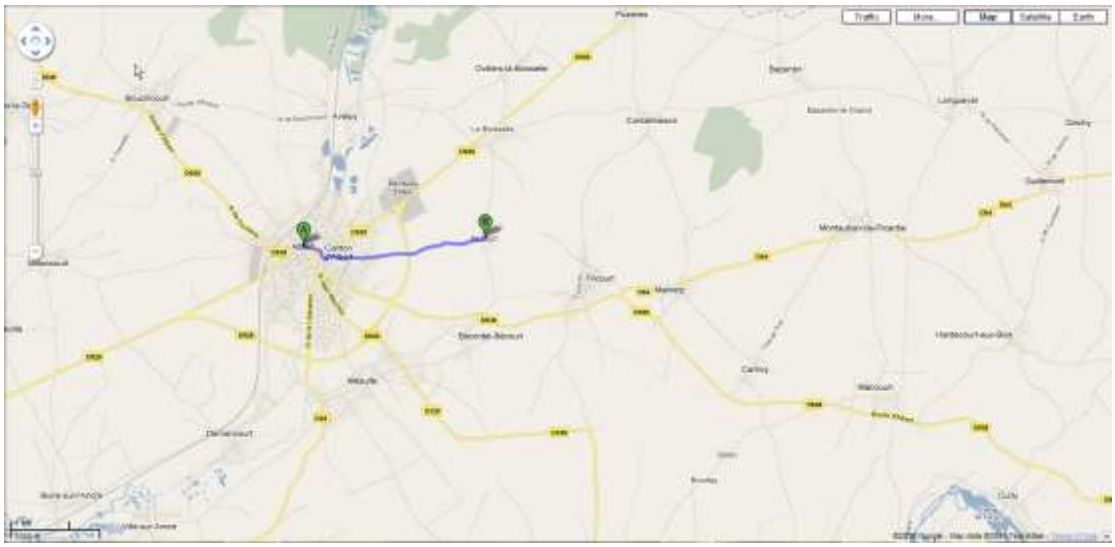
A - Harfleur. B – Havre. C - Rouen

The trains especially Troop trains are awful in France. They bump along and stop for ages at any old wayside station. We detrained at Rouen and went to a rest camp in which we were practically prisoners for the day as there was a good barbwire fence round us. However, I was very sleepy, so after a feed I slept for some hours. We were here till evening about 10pm then got a train and next morning found ourselves at 'Albert' at 10am.



A – Rouen. B - Albert

We marched from the station to a bit of a camp nearby where we had dinner then marched to 'Becourt' camp about 3 or 4 miles.



A – Albert. B - Becourt

We were here just about on the position where the first men went over in the Battle of the Somme. We had a good look round the old battlefield during the few days we were there. I visited 'Pozieres' or where it was and the great mine which is 75 yards across and over 50 feet deep. We did a few route marches and a little drill here and on 26th June[14] we marched to 'Senlis' and rejoined the Battalion, which was out resting and had been out for some time then.

A – Becourt. B - Senlis

I had been away just 5 months and was feeling tip top for the good spell I'd had. We did a lot of hard training here mostly practising attacks over the old battlefield. One night we marched to 'Aveloy' and to a camp known as 'Marlborough Huts'. The troops must have felt happy that night for no sooner did we have our gear off than we started to sing like anything. Anyone coming on the scene would have thought we were drunk or something. Next morning we had to do a practice attack using live ammunition. It was much better than the sham attacks. I took 60 rounds of ammunition with me and fired 59 of them. It

was great sport and my arms ached with holding the rifle up and it got exceedingly hot on the iron parts. After that we marched back to 'Senlis'. While there we also went on a march to 'Corbie' a nice town about 10 miles from 'Amiens'. We stayed in a billet there for 1 night and while there I had a lovely swim in the Somme Canal, the first swim I'd had since leaving Egypt. The object of this march was for us to march across a pontoon bridge that the engineers had made and so to test it. We went back to 'Senlis' next day. While here we had some divisional sports held at 'Henancourt' about 2 miles away at which the King was present. We also had leave to 'Amiens' from here and I went twice. It is rather a nice town and seems cleaner and better kept than lots of the French towns here. The Cathedral is very large and beautiful and well worth seeing.

22nd July 1917 - Millencourt

We left 'Senlis' and went to 'Millencourt' about 1½ miles away. I was here in isolation on account of a chap who slept near me getting fever or something.

29th July 1917 - Blaringhem

[15]. We left and marched to 'Aveluy' to entrain for the north. We arrived at Saint Omer on July 30th and marched to a village called 'Blaringhem' about 10 miles, most of the way along a canal.

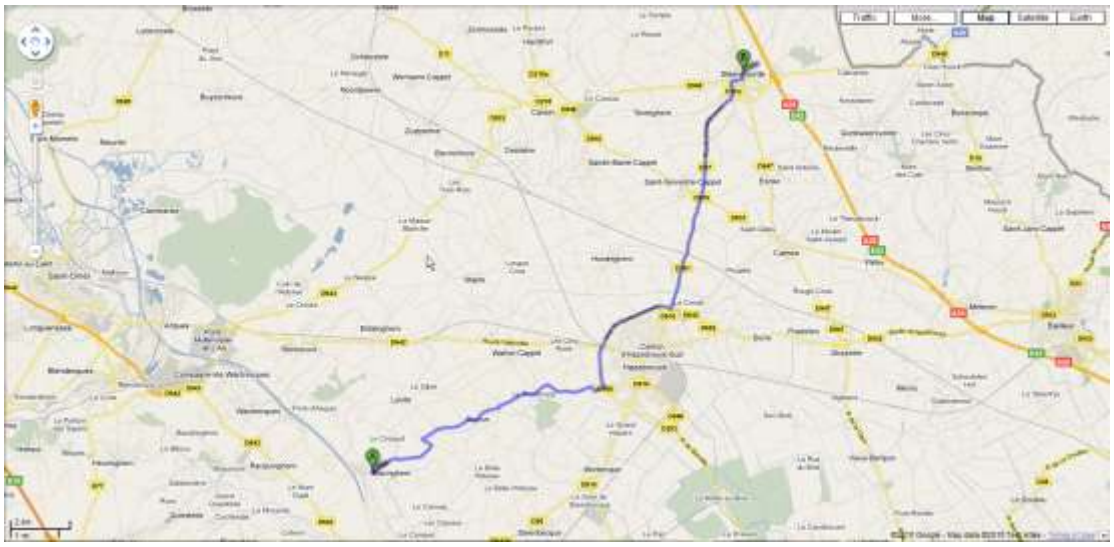
A – Senlis. B – Aveluy. C - Blaringhem

It was a nice clean place compared with the dirty Somme Villages. While here we had a very decent billet and lots of straw to sleep on. We did some great route marches from here and also some hard training mostly in preparation for attacking the Hun Pill boxes that were known to exist on the sector where we were going. We usually had no afternoon parades but often enough it was well into the afternoon before we got back from the stunts etc. We spent most of our spare time here playing cards and every pay day some of the lads had a 'night out' and got gloriously drunk, and thereby hangs a tale. I'll never forget one chap who came home drunk one night. He just got up the ladder and then after a bit, in trying to come down, he fell most of the way. After he got up again (with help) he suddenly took a fit and it took about 6 men to hold him down. One chap got a fright of him and somehow he ran out along a narrow plank above a 10 ft drop on to us as we were on the ground floor. He had hardly any clothes on and presented a queer

spectacle perched on the end of the plank. Oh! Didn't we roar and one chap laughed until he could laugh no longer. I'll bet the chap could not have done that again for anything without falling onto us. It rained a great deal in the early part of August and made it very awkward for the harvest, which was ready to be taken in, but it was got in by degrees. At times we helped a little.

17th September 1917 - Steenvoorde

We left 'Blaringhem' on September 17th and had a long march of about 18 miles to 'Steenvoorde'[16].

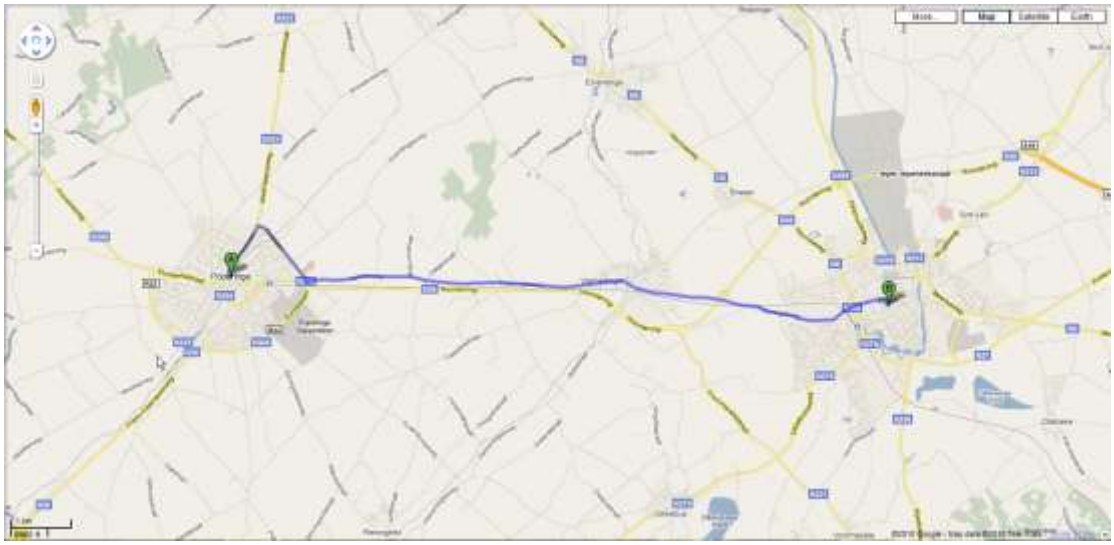


A – Blaringhem. B - Steenvoorde

This was a decent sort of town. We were billeted in a farm for the night and next day went to a camp near 'Poperinge' in Belgium where we stayed 6 days.

A- Steenvoorde. B – Poperinge, Belgium

Things seemed very different round this part, there were a great many windmills and a lot of hop gardens, which were being harvested at this time. The low-lying ground was mostly very wet too. After the 6 days there, the Battalion went to the line at Ypres.



A – Poperinge, Belgium. B - Ypres

For some reason that I've never been able to define I was put on the *'Nucleus'*, that is, a certain number of men are left out when there is likely to be a big action fought and in case of disaster to the Battalion, these men would form a foundation for the new Battalion.

24th September 1917

On 24th September, we (the Nucleus) marched to a camp near 'Aberle' for one night and on the 25th we marched to the Divisional Nucleus camp near 'Caestre'.

A – Ypres. B - Caestre'

While out here we did a bit of drill and an occasional small route march.

September 26th 1917

The Battalion fought in the battle of 'Polygon Wood' and did very well. I've never heard such tremendous artillery fire as we heard about this time, and I believe there has never been such a mass of artillery in one place before or since as there was at 'Ypres' during our offensive. We were at 'Caestre Hill till October 2nd then marched back to the camp near 'Poperinge' and rejoined the Battalion.

After another six days here we went by bus to 'Ypres' and spent one night in tents and early next day, October 9th, moved forward to the line. We had to march through the area that had been fought over recently and never have I seen such devastation even on the Somme. The road, which was mostly made of sawn timber laid flat over the boggy ground, was a great mark for the Hun artillery and along its whole length was strewn all kinds of wrecked transport including motor lorries and field ambulances and in one place I saw a 6 inch field gun which had got off the timber and so got bogged in the mud. There were simply dozens of dead horses along both sides of the road and in many instances whole teams (of horses) had been killed in one spot.

As we got nearer the front line there were occasional dead Huns and a few of our chaps lying about. I saw one of our poor fellows sitting under cover of a broken pill box and I thought he was alive at first but he had been dead at least a day, and another man was lying at his feet.

The last part of the journey was over rough and shell torn ground and at last we got to a trench, which was our support line. We had to improve it a good deal but it wasn't much of a home at the best. The Hun soon spotted us too from his planes, and in the evening strafed us something terrific. Our S.O.S. went up from the front line and then you'd have thought the end of the world had come. The row was appalling and the Hun dropped shells everywhere but on top of us, and you couldn't hear them coming for the noise. Your first intimation that a shell had landed close was to see the earth fly skywards just in front or behind. I didn't feel so badly frightened of shells on this particular occasion as I have at times since.

There were some great air fights at this time and in one fight we saw 3 planes come down within a minute (2 of ours and 1 Hun). The Hun was on fire but ours didn't fall so badly and one glided down, or should say volplaned down.

We had 4 days in this rotten position. After 2 of the days we baled the water out of a Hun pillbox and lived in it but it wasn't a very nice home (too damp and crowded). One night we went on a fatigue job to a place called 'Cable Head' which was where the underground cable came to. The job was to carry ammunition to the forward dump at Battalion headquarters. I had a good issue of rum before we went as it was beastly weather and it (the rum) went to my head. Oh, I'll never forget it. It was funny getting along the narrow duckboard track with one end of a pole on which was suspended a box of ammunition. I fell off the track once and the box on top of me and simply laughed and then we came to the end of the boards and had to go over the shell torn ground. Well, I miraculously missed falling into the big shell holes of water but fell into lots of small ones. I was wearing a huge overcoat and I thought it would be a most fearful sight with mud but somehow it didn't stick like 'Somme mud' would have. I had a somewhat merry

evening under the most awful conditions too. So much for about 3 or 4 spoonfuls of rum. This is the only time I ever got merry though and I've never taken enough of other sort of drink to get merry on it.

October 13th 1917

On 13th October we marched back to dugouts on the Ypres Canal and stayed there 4 days. Very nearly got bombed one night too. The Hun was great at bombing at night round Ypres and came over every fine night, but usually tried to bomb the transport lines and horses.

October 17th 1917

On 17th October we went into the reserve line on 'Westhoek Ridge' for 1 night to act as supports for one of the other divisions. We were not needed however and next day went back beyond Ypres and lived in little dugouts for 3 days.

October 21st 1917

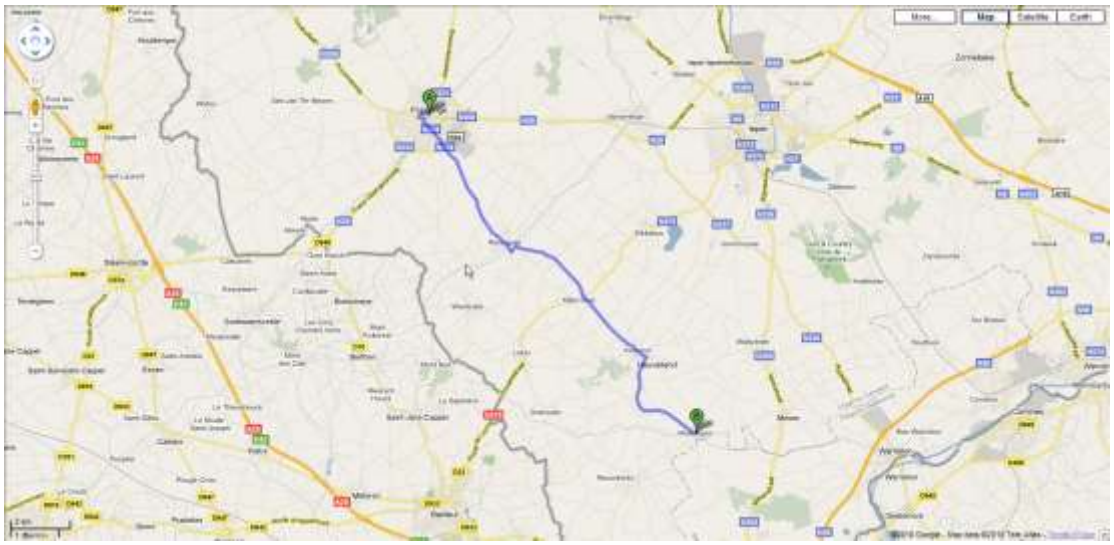
On 21st October we again went into the support line on left of 'Polygon Wood'. We, ie 2 platoons, lived in a large Hun dugout which we reckoned shell proof. It was at least warm though very crowded. We stayed in it for 2 days during which we only had to carry rations to the front line and sometimes some wire. It was while on one of these ration-carrying parties one night that our guns all opened up and of course the Hun retaliated to some order. I reckoned myself a 'deaden' that night but somehow he landed the shells everywhere but just on top of us. 2 landed in the trench just round a corner from another chap and I and the concussion simply staggered us for a while. One poor fellow lying in the trench had both shells practically on top of him and when we discovered him we thought he was on fire as his clothes were smoking like one thing. It was the white phosphorous smoke from the shell. His tin hat had a hole through it just in front of his forehead and his clothes were ripped in various places, but we could only find one wound on him. However, he died in the end at the hospital. I fancy the terrific shock and concussion did more to kill him than his wound. We moved out of our shell proof dugout on 23rd to the front line and had not been out an hour before a large shell blew the roof in and buried 13 men but none of them were badly hurt so at least the roof had saved their lives by bursting the shell. We stayed 2 miserable days in the front line then went back to a place called 'Halfway House'. I shall never forget that march out, I was clean done and simply wouldn't have cared what happened to me – I'd have welcomed a shell that night.

October 26th 1917 - Poperinge

We marched to a camp near 'Poperinge' and from here I went into the town of 'Pop'. It is a rather big and nice place though the Hun used to shell it a good deal. I remember seeing the largest grapes I've ever seen in this town (and only 5 francs a lb). I didn't try any at this price.

11th – 15th November 1917

[17]We marched to 'Socre' and on 12th to 'Aldershot Camp'. We did a bit of drill etc. here and on 15th marched to 'Wulvergem'.



A – Poperinge. B - Wulvergem'

I slept the first night in a drying room, which had just been erected. It was very warm inside too.

16th November – 15th December 1917

Our platoon was sent on a fatigue job for the artillery. We had to act as carrying party to some engineers who were making an observation post near 'Messines' village. We were living in the reserve line while on this job which lasted till 15th December. It was a very easy job and consisted of about 2 hours work in the morning and about 1 or 2 hours in the evening at dusk.

We used to while away the spare time in various ways such as cards, rifle shooting practice or improving our home. It snowed for the first time on December 2nd just a fortnight later than in the previous winter. There were some tremendous shell holes in places round here and also some huge mine craters a bit back from us. The Hun artillery used to shell a battery about 400 yards in the rear and sometimes got rather close to our trench but otherwise there wasn't much except rats to worry us. I tried to blow us all up one day by playing with cordite (smokeless explosive) which we used, for lighting our fire. A few pieces at a time burn comparatively slow but this time I managed to light a bundle about 2 inches in diameter and 9 inches long and when I saw it alight I tried to put it out by throwing it down and putting my foot on it. It was no go and the next best thing was to get out of the trench. I just got out when the whole lot went up in a great sheet of flame and simply filled our dugout and trench with flame. My mate sitting on a tin nearby fell backwards to get out of the way but even then got his eyebrows and hair singed a bit. All the harm done though was a sandbag burned and our dugout made somewhat whiffy with cordite smoke for a while. We roared after it was over of course and it all started from my trying to burn a great slug out of a hole.

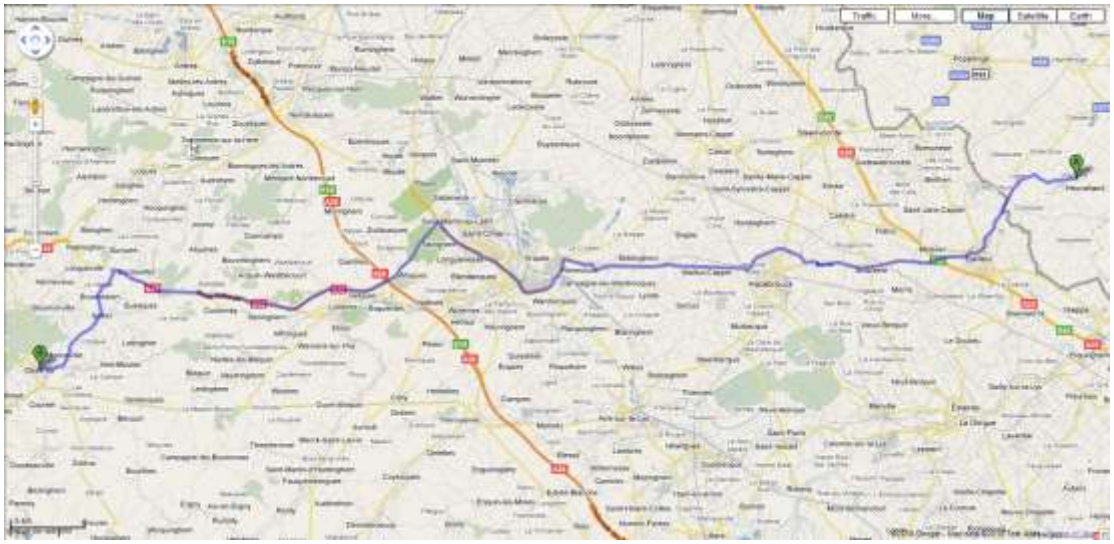
15th December 1917

[18]We went back to 'Wulvergem' for 1 night and next day the Battalion came out of the line and we went to 'Ramillies Camp' at 'Kemmel'. This was a well laid out camp with duckboards on all tracks.

A - Wulvergem. B - Kemmel

18th December 1917 - Desvres

We entrained early in the morning and arrived at 'Desvres' (18 kilos from Boulogne) about 10pm.



A – Kemmel. B - Desvres

It had snowed heavily through the day there. We got a drink of cocoa from the YMCA then marched to billets in the town. Our Company was put into a large building, part of a cement factory and not at all a good billet for such cold weather. However, we had to make the best of it and we were issued with palliasses (a mattress made with canvas and cloth and filled with straw) and straw and each had two blankets so at least we kept warm at night.

At first we had fires inside but they were eventually disallowed so it was then awfully cold by day. We used to have physical exercises and a bit of drill or a route march in the mornings and usually no afternoon parades. We had Battalion Brigade and Divisional sports while here which went off very well. We had a great spread on Christmas Day here.

Our billet was converted into a huge 'dining hall' and tables and forms capable of seating the Battalion installed. The sergeants waited on the men and the food was plentiful and good.

On Christmas night there was a great snowstorm, which lasted well on into the next morning and in the afternoon of Boxing Day there were great snowball fights[19] in the Town Square and elsewhere. The men made a special mark of all officers from the lowest to the highest rank. An officer had only to show himself to be greeted by a shower of snowballs, but they all took it in good part.

We stayed at 'Desvres' till January 30th 1918 and most of the time it was very cold though the winter was nothing like as severe as the previous one. The ice only formed about 6 inches thick and didn't last a great time either.

30th January 1918

We marched to 'Samer' and entrained for the front.

A – Desvres. B - Samer

The engine of our train got off the line just as it was coming into 'Samer' so we had to wait till another engine came from Boulogne and then had to go a long way round by way of Boulogne and Calais and at last got to the rail head near 'Neuv. Eglise' and marched to a camp nearby.[20]

A - Samer, France. B - Neuve-Église, France

31st January 1918

Next day 31st, we moved into support line through 'Whyschate' on left end of Messines Ridge. Our Platoon was put into a large Hun pillbox called 'Polka Estaminet'. (Estaminet is a French pub or place where spirits and beer is obtainable) but there was no beer here. This pillbox had a roof 6ft thick of solid reinforced concrete and the walls were about 4ft thick. It was divided into 8 rooms and capable of holding about 40 men comfortably. There were bunks made of wire netting inside and it was quite shell proof. It had had several direct hits and the shells had made scarcely any impression on it. At the same time I would not like to be in it if it got hit with a large shell. We stayed in this pillbox till 4th February then took over the front line till 8th February. It was very quiet in this sector at this time and the weather wasn't too bad. I was on an observation post when on duty and we could often see the Huns walking about behind his line, which was about 1,100 yards away.

8th February 1918

On 8th February we moved back to reserves and all we had to do there was to carry wet rations once a night to the front line about 1½ to 2 hours job. The rest of the time we stayed in bed in our cushy little dugout.

13th February 1918

13th February our platoon went to 'Wall Farm'[21], which was a large pillbox in No Man's Land and not at all a nice place. At first there was a most awful track to it through mud and shell holes but later they laid a duckboard track to it. Fritz used to go mad on it about 3 times per night and for a few minutes he'd put a barrage of pigeon bombs and machine gun bullets all around us. The best place then was inside but some of the men couldn't get in always so had to take their chances. No one was hurt though in the 4 days we occupied it.

17th February 1918

We went out to support line and again lived in 'Polka Estaminet'[21] and on 21st February marched to 'Ramillies Camp'. Near this camp is Mount Kemmel, which is one of the highest points in Belgium. At one time there was an observation tower on it but even from the ground a splendid view is obtainable right over Ypres and right back to Lille on a clear day. We stayed here until 15th March and did fatigue work for the engineers to the front line when on night work, and when on day work went by a little train to a place near Hill 60.

15th March 1918

[22] - We went into the reserve line, or our Company did while some of the Company was in supports and 1 in front line. About this time the Hun offensive commenced on the Somme. We used a great many gas shells on our position and one night fired over 2,000 light and medium shells in 3 hours round where we were so there was plenty of gas in the air and quite a number of men were affected in the eyes with it. I lost my voice for about 2 weeks as a result of getting a little. I lived in a pillbox called 'Gun Farm' for the 10 days we were here.

25th – 29th March 1918

Then on March 25th we heard we were off to the Somme again to try and stop the German rush on Amiens. So we went back to 'Ramillies Camp' for the night and on 26th March went by bus to 'Berthen' to a billet and on 27th March to 'Godewaersvelde' and got the train for the 'Somme'.
We arrived at 'Doullens' at 8pm and our Company was detailed to remain at the station and unload transport off the train.

A - Ramillies, Belgium. B - Berthen, France. C - Godewaersvelde, France. D - Doullens, France

We stayed there that night and next day and till 3am on 29th. When we first pulled into 'Doullens' you'd have thought the Hun was almost in the town. No one seemed to know just where he was but they knew he was advancing and lots of people were on the station waiting for a train to take them back somewhere – I suppose they scarcely cared where. It was pitiful to see old women with hastily gathered belongings waiting there.

29th March 1918

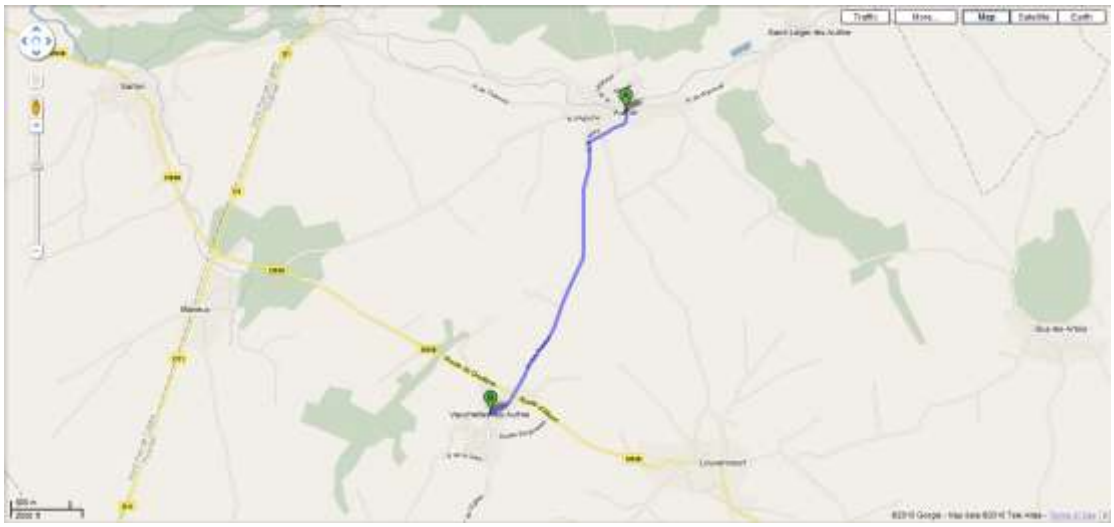
At 3am on 29th March we got buses to 'Bus'[23], a village not a great way off and we only remained there about 2 hours then marched to 'Authie' and billeted at a farm.

A - Doullens, France, B - Authie

It was a cold billet with a concrete floor and I gathered a bundle of grass to sleep on and so softened my bed somewhat.

30th March 1918

We moved to 'Vauchellis-l-Authie' and we were billeted in a one-time Army school, which had been recently evacuated.



A – Authie. B - Vauchelles-lès-Authie, Somme, Picardy, France

It was a classy place with electric light in all the huts and beds or bunks in some of them. There were a great many hares about here and the chaps used to go shooting them in the evening and one party even took a Lewis gun out after them. The men used to approach a paddock or field from different directions and if any hares started up, well everyone was firing from all sides and it's a great wonder someone wasn't hit. There

were some narrow escapes as it was. Food wasn't too plentiful at this camp so hare was a very welcome addition to the rations for those lucky enough to shoot some. We did a little drill at this camp and on April 4th moved by bus to 'Daours'[24] near 'Corbie'.

A - Vauchelles-lès-Authie, France. B – Daours.

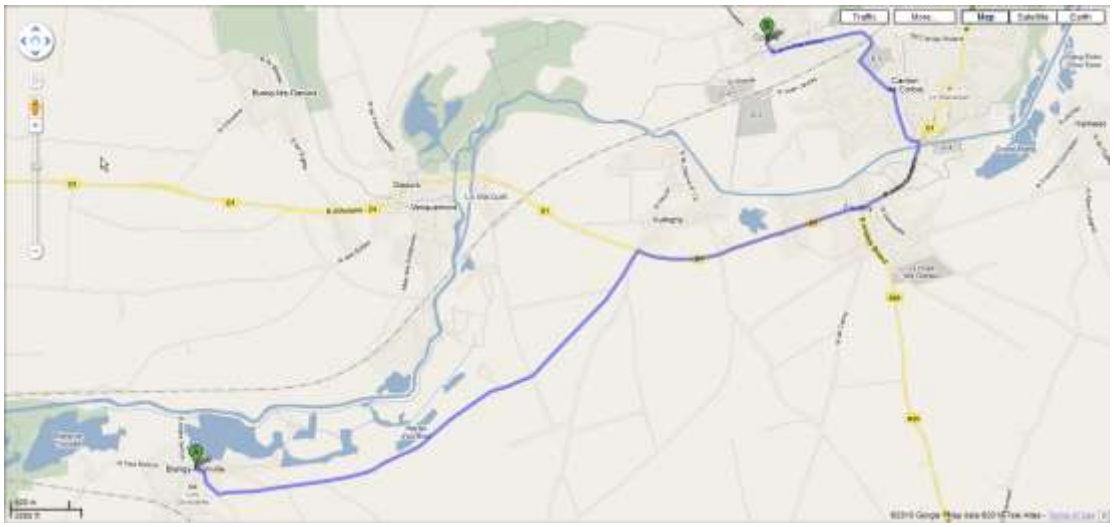
We got to this place at 3am and it was raining, and had rained a good part of the night. We then set out to march, no one knew where I think, and marched till we were all dead beat and with no breakfast. At last we halted on the 'Amiens and Noyan' road at a place called 'Centelles Wood'. We had then to set to and make homes as best we could out of nothing. I got some branches of trees and lay them on the ground and over them some straw. Then I drove 4 stakes in and spread my waterproof over them and my home was made. I at least kept dry and slept well under the sheet. We had to be ready at any moment to move forward. The French[24] were adjoining us on the opposite side of the road and it was the farthest south we'd been. I had a good look at the French – 75 mm batteries here. There seemed to be nothing of them except a barrel and the wheels. They could put up a most effective and terrible barrage on any approaching Huns.
We were here till April 7th and on the evening of that date went back to 'Blangy Tronville' on the 'Somme'.

A – Daours. B - Blangy-Tronville, France

It was a miserable dirty village and we had a dirty billet but had to make the best of it. The Divisional Canteen was here and I got half crushed to death trying to get into it. I've never been in such a squeeze before or since, and don't want to be. Several men fainted as it was.

9th April 1918

On 9th April we marched to 'Corbie'.



A - Blangy-Tronville, France. B - Corbie

What a difference there was to when I was there last. It was entirely deserted and had been shelled a bit. We were billeted in a fine home in the 'Rue de Bastin'. The people had simply walked out in what they stood up in and left absolutely everything behind. All drawers and locked places had been broken into by our troops as no Hun had got that far. It was terrible to see the way beautiful things had been thrown about and bed clothing thrown on the floor and walked on[25]. It was mostly done by men 'the worst for drink'; of which there was an unlimited supply everywhere. When I say our troops did it, I don't mean Australians only as the retreating English troops went through the town first, but our chaps did the same and we hadn't gone out of our billet 10 minutes before some of our own Battalion were turning things inside out.

Our Company was only here 1 night and next day April 10th went to 'Vaire Corbie' about 2 miles nearer the line which was about 3 miles from 'Corbie'. We were here carrying hot food every night to men in the front and support lines. It was a good job and there was any amount of food left behind by the civilians. Potatoes were the chief item and we had them boiled, baked, fried, chips and made into a sort of pie with bully beef. I ate more potatoes there than I'd ever eaten before or since. The Hun used to shell this village often and parts were knocked about a good deal.

There was an old man and woman and a boy still remaining in the village in a house, which was somewhat apart from the rest of the places. They were all right until one day the Hun took a fancy to them and started to issue *iron rations* in the shape of 5.9 shells. He fired 25 rounds at the house and got 3 hits on one end. The old woman only came to the door and looked out each time one landed close and when one hit the end she calmly walked round to see what damage had been done. I've never seen the likes anywhere, as

most civilians' get for their lives as soon as the shells start. The old woman got slightly wounded but was more concerned about her cat, which had also got wounded, than she was about herself. One place we had to take rations to was marked by the Hun. Every evening at the time we'd get to a certain spot where we had to cross a canal, on a pontoon bridge, he would open up for about a couple of minutes. He almost invariably struck the right time and it meant adopting the prone position quick, as there was no cover at all. The canal on one side and a lagoon or swamp on the other. It was wonderful how he could land the shells right on the road, which was only about 8ft wide. However, we escaped him on every night but one and on that night he opened up right on the spot where the party was and killed one man and wounded another[26] and others had very narrow escapes. Most of us only got this trip about twice though.

18th April 1918

We went back to 'Corbie' to the same billet we had occupied when there before. We did a few parades in the mornings. The Hun was now using some heavy shells on the town and there were several casualties in one of our Company's. He as usual made a mark of the fine old church and houses in the vicinity suffered severely. I got crook on 21st and lay on the bed all day and at night we had to move into the line. I didn't go to the doctor but somehow got to the support line, though I had to fall out and come on in the rear. We had a deep dug out to live in and I felt rotten for a day or so. It was a slight attack of trench fever I think.

25th April 1918

We had a fine commanding position on a hill near the Somme at 'Sailly-le-Sec' and on the morning of 25th April the enemy came over on our front line Company but got severely dealt with by Lewis gunfire[27] and never reached our line. He also attacked in great force on the opposite bank of the river at 'Villers-Breteneaux' and captured that town, but it was re-taken by one or our Brigades the next night. We had a splendid view of the stunt as far as shellfire was concerned.
You could clearly see where our shells were falling and the Hun shells were falling all over the place on our side of the ridge during the afternoon.

29th April 1918

We went into the front line, and our platoon were put in an advanced post. The trench was only about waist deep but the Hun didn't shell much where we were. I was on listening post every night, 1 hour on, 2 hours off most of the time. Our artillery was worse than Fritz here and constantly dropped shells behind us and to our flank till I used to hate our own S.O.S. shoots worse than anything else there. Hun aeroplanes were a great nuisance here and were always hovering round and there were many air fights in which ours nearly always came off the worst. There were 10 of our planes shot down while we were in this trench and in that time we only saw about 4 Huns downed, but they tell us you can't judge by appearances.

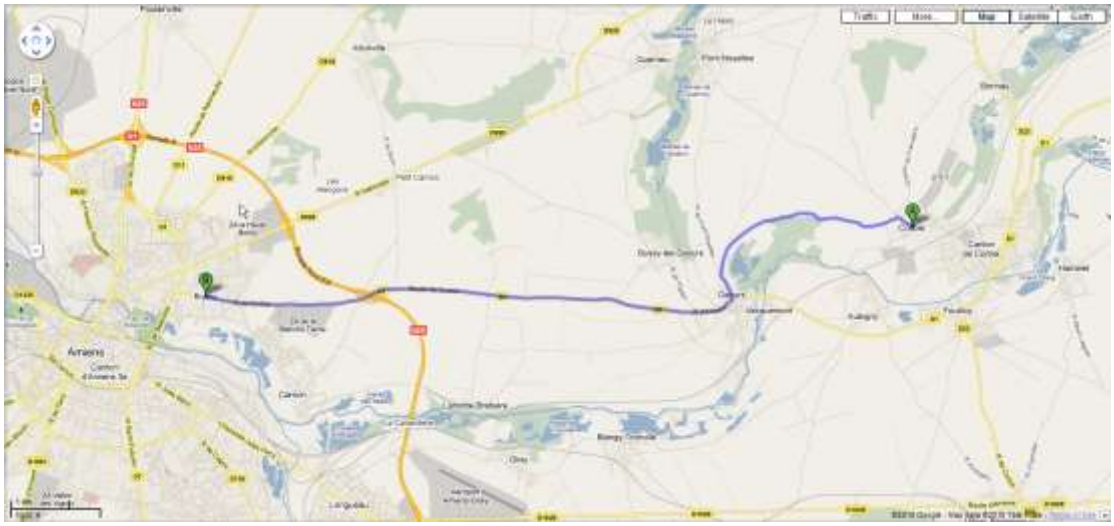
His night bombers were very active too and several times emptied their loads too close to be pleasant. They used also to drop an affair that would burst several hundred feet up into hundreds of bright lights, which opened out umbrella fashion as they descended. It was very pretty but not nice to be under if it burst too low especially. The weather by day was very hot here and we found the days very long. We only had about 6 hours real

darkness and if there was a moon we had no darkness to speak of, so it meant 19 hours of daylight in which to sleep. For my part I couldn't sleep more that 4 hours at most and the rest of the time there was nothing to do. The monotony was awful at times.

We stayed here till 22nd May then we changed over with one of the other Companies and went back to the village, which was only about 600 yards from the front line in the part where we were. It was better here as we could at least move about a bit by day and not have to walk in a crouching position and time passed better too. The Hun behaved fairly well and didn't shell much. I was on observer's duty, which consisted of counting shells. It does and did seem a silly thing to be doing. If there was heavy firing you couldn't count them of course. The mosquitoes were very bad here.

1st June 1918

On 1st June 1[29] we got relieved and went back to 'Rivery' near 'Amiens' to billets.



A – Corbie. B – Rivery

It was a long march and was midnight when we got relieved so didn't get to 'Rivery' till about midday on 2nd and were dead tired. We were billeted in houses evacuated by the inhabitants, but unlike the more forward places the people had taken most of the furniture away with them. We managed to get tables and chairs etc. and one billet had a piano. There were a lot of irrigation canals here and on these we used to go boating in an evening, which was great fun. There were a great many strawberries about but they were mostly eaten somewhat on the green side as no one gave them a chance to get properly ripe. We had swimming sports here several times in the town baths or in the lakes and I had several swims in the canals. Some of the punts and flat-bottomed boats were very leaky and several times we had narrow escapes from sinking. The Hun used to shell Amiens while we were here and several times set parts of it on fire. The shells used to sound like thunder rolling as they came over.

13th June 1918

On 13th June I was sent out to 'Pernois' with the 'Nucleus' and the Battalion went in reserves and eventually into the line at 'Morlancourt'. The Nucleus marched to a staging camp on the first night and next morning went on to 'Pernois'.

A – Rivery. B – Pernois.

It is the usual sort of Somme village, but we had a very easy time there. It was practically come on parade if you liked as there was no roll-call so several hardly ever came on parade but spent the time in the woods playing cards till dinner time and there was no afternoon parade as a rule. There were quite a number of villages in easy walking distance (out of bounds) but that didn't stop us visiting them. There was a YMCA Cinema too, but they only had a change of programme twice a week so we had to go elsewhere 4 nights if we wanted to go anywhere. There was a good concert party in St Ledger about 4 kilos away and pictures in St Ouen about 6 kilos and our Divisional Concert Party in 'Bertecourt' 2 kilos. We used at times help to load the hospital train which left almost every day and sometimes several times. The worst thing we had to do was guard. You'd have thought it would win the war. We had to drill for guard on the afternoon of the day before mounting and also on the morning of the day we went. There was a band to play us on and off and we had to stand still as mice for about 40 minutes each time we went on and that was a big strain on us with a full pack up. I was out here 6 weeks altogether.

July 25th 1918

On 25th July I was warned for Blighty leave and next day 26th went by train to Boulogne by way of 'Doullens', 'St. Pol' and 'Etaples'. We got to Boulogne about 6pm and after a wait on the station got buses to a camp on a hill above town. Next morning we marched to the wharf and embarked about 11am.

The 'Aussies' were on the *SS Victoria* and we got to Folkestone about 1pm and entrained for London. It was good to travel in a comfortable train once more. We arrived at Victoria Station about 5pm and marched to Horseferry Road and eventually got fixed up with clothes, cash etc about 6.30pm. Next thing was to find a barber and after that we (that is, 2 of us) went to Peel House for the night. I slept like a top that night and was up about 7.30 next morning and had a 'dinkum' bath, the best I'd had for ages.

After breakfast we visited the tailors and then I went to Euston to catch the 12 o'clock train for Manchester. We went from St James Park by tube. It was the first time I'd ever been in them. They are lovely and fast too. I arrived at Manchester about 4pm and went out to Withington. Everyone got a great surprise to see me of course. I stayed there for the whole of my leave and had a good time. I went to Southport just for the

day on two occasions. It's a lovely place and when I was there it was mid-summer holiday time and so was crowded with people. The weather was lovely except for one day when it rained a bit.

August 9th 1918

On August 9th I regretfully took leave of my good friends and went back to London. I arrived at Euston about 4pm and after getting lost on the tube for a while I eventually found myself waiting for a bus at Victoria Station. I went out to Hampstead to see someone of whom I had the address and after that went back to Peel House for the night. I had to report to Railway Transport Officer at Victoria next morning at 7am. There were hundreds of 'leave' men waiting on the station for the trains. After about an hour we got on a train and arrived at Folkestone about midday and stayed at the rest camp till 3pm then embarked on the *SS Victoria* and arrived at 'Boulogne' at 6pm and marched to 'One Blanket Hill' camp. Fritz raided the town a couple of times before 12 o'clock and had us out of our beds into the trenches provided as air raid shelters. When I got there they were already overcrowded so I sat on the bank for a bit and then went back to the tent. Reveille was at 4am.

11th August 1918

On 11th August we entrained for our various destinations – mine was 'Pernois' and I got there about 4pm and went to the Divisional Reinforcement Wing Camp. I was there two days during which I did nothing and then marched to 'Vignacourt' and got the little train to 'Allonville'.

A – Pernois. B – Vignacourt. C - Allonville, France

The Division Nucleus camp was near the village and I went to it. Some of us did a couple of days harvesting there. There was a Yank aerodrome right against our camp so we saw lots of planes and many of them used to get home with many bullet and shrapnel holes in the wings and other parts. I stayed here from 13th August till 19th. On the latter date some of us were sent to rejoin the Battalion. We went to place called 'Daours' by little train then hopped on a motorbus to 'Corbie', which was sadly knocked about by shellfire. From 'Corbie' we hopped another bus to 'Villers-Bretonneux. From there we walked to 'Warfuse' and then once again hopped a bus which took us as near the Battalion as we could get by main roads.

A – Daours. B – Corbie. C - Villers-Bretonneux. D - Lamotte-Warfusée, France

We then had to walk about 1-½ miles which was about 3 times as far as we would have liked. Our company was about ½ mile from the road but of course we didn't know that at first and it comes sort of natural to get lost in the Army anyhow. However, I'd been away from the Battalion for nine weeks so had a decent spell and missed a couple of *hop-overs* ((over the trenches) in the bargain. They had a great stunt on 8th August and went a long way on that date and next day after hopping off from 'Villers-Bretonneux' the Battalion took and mopped up the village of 'Vaux-Villiers' on the 9th. They suffered somewhat severe casualties on that day too.

19th – 25th August 1918

On 19th – 25th August [30] we were working for the tunnelers making a deep dugout. It had over 20 entrances but in the end it was condemned and was only half completed. It's as well anyway in the light of after events, that it wasn't finished, as it would have been too far in rear of the front altogether.

26th August 1918

On 26th August we moved to reserves and had a bath on the way up in a Fritz portable shower bath, which was a beauty. While at the bath a Hun plane came over and shot one of our balloons down. We had a good march altogether and at last got to a bit of a trench and some platoons were put into a sunken road to dig in. The Hun shelled very heavily next day all along the ridge just in front of us and on the evening of 27th August we moved forward about 2,000 yards but the shelling had stopped altogether by then as the Hun had retreated.

There was a huge German gun mounted in a little wood near here. It had apparently been used to shell 'Amiens'. The barrel was over 50 foot long and was of 15-inch calibre. The carriage and mountings were larger than a large railway engine and it was all worked by electricity. The engine and dynamo were in a nearby dugout. The breech of the gun had been entirely blown away, whether by accident or on purpose I don't know. It's by far the largest weapon I've ever seen. The explosives, which used to propel the shell on its deadly mission was in the form of black sticks about ¾ inch in diameter. Curiously enough

there was not a single shell anywhere about so the Hun must have either fired the last or taken them away. Probably the latter I should think.

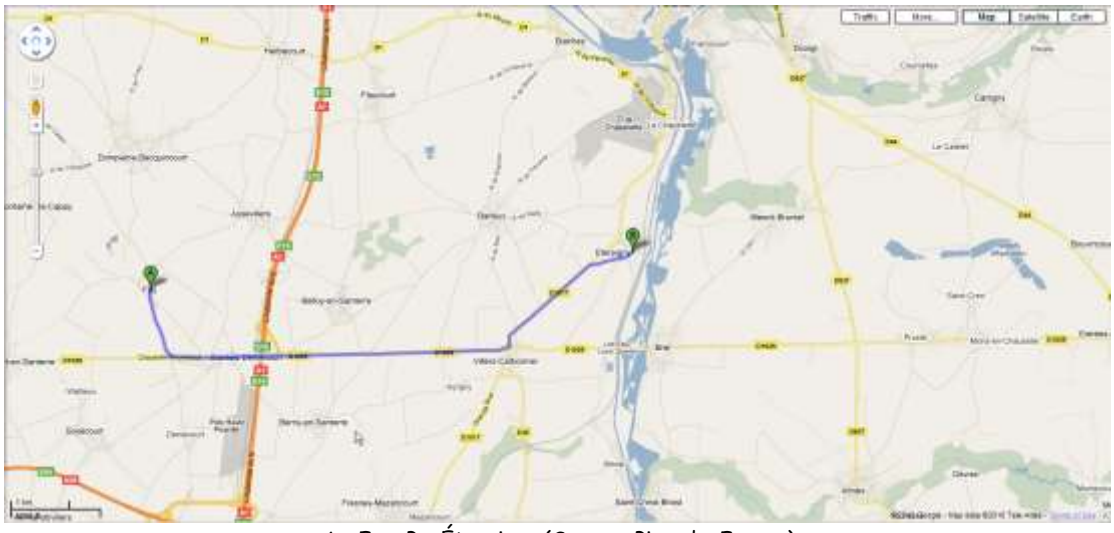
Note: Could this be the gun (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amiens_Gun).

28th August 1918

On 28th August about 1 pm we moved forward again about 3,000 yards to near the village of 'Fay' and stayed there till evening then went forward again with intention of taking a village but another Battalion had already gone through it and found no one there.

A - Lamotte-Warfusée. B - Fay, Somme, Picardy, France.

The Hun had flown, so we settled down in a trench till daybreak then went through the other Battalion and advanced 5,000 yards without opposition. Then the Hun opened up with machine guns and whiz bangs (a small shell that travels near the speed of sound so that it explodes at the same time as or shortly before the sound of its flight is heard) and we waited till the division on our flank came up and then advanced 2,000 yards to 'Eterpigny' on the 'Somme Canal'.



A - Fay. B – Éterpigny (Somme, Picardy, France)

The Hun used whiz bangs freely at point blank range and one party of us, suddenly coming under machine guns whilst in the open, had to go for our lives to a sunken road and then over about 60 yards of open ground to another sunken road. I'd never known what it was to knock at the knees till then but I experienced it then. [31]We were all well loaded up and ran hard, but not too fast and the bullets were flicking dirt up all round us and flying past our ears. I expected to feel one every second across that awful 60 yards but somehow nobody was hit and I simply took a flying leap into the road and was too done to move for some time.

After we'd been there a while the Hun started to throw iron at us in the shape of large shrapnel and high explosive shells. They were mostly immediately on our left where the road was lined with trees and the way the Hun grouped was wonderful. Every shrapnel would burst just among the treetops and away would go limbs in all directions and shrapnel everywhere. There were also whiz-bangs that simply slid like greased lighting over the ground. We didn't suffer any casualties in our platoon but some of the platoons lost some men.

The Hun smashed all the bridges over the canal either by shellfire or mines set before he left. In the evening we shifted to a deep dugout and had a little sleep and then went a regular route march for rations (wet and dry).

We had a good wait in the cold too and after we got back with them we had to shift into a trench. The trench was all right, but the Hun was using awful shells about us and kept us in constant state of nervous tension till he at last eased off.

August 30th 1918

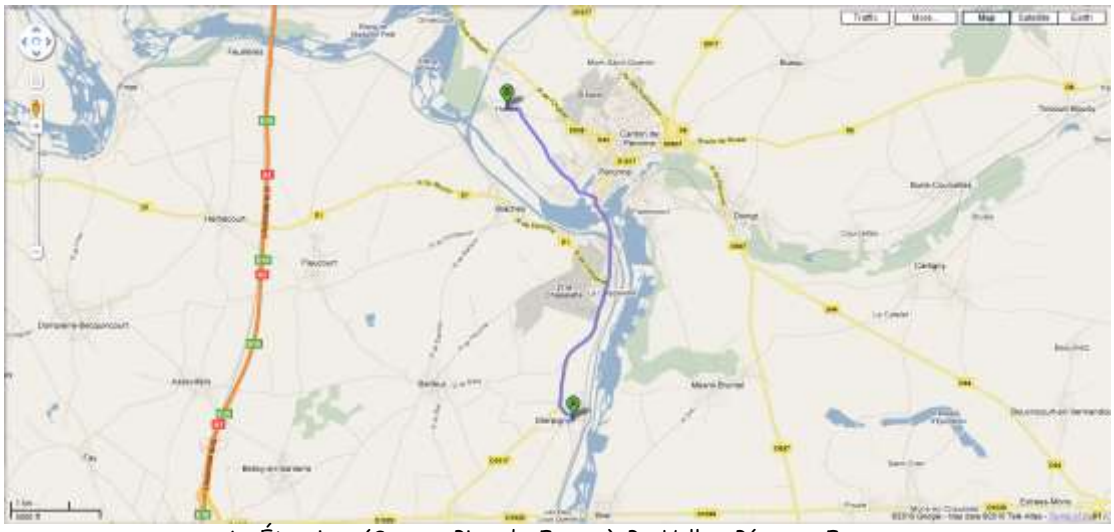
It was now 30th August and at about 3 or 4 pm some of us carried the hot boxes back to Battalion Headquarters and once there, were to wait for the Company on its way out, but we got tired of waiting and decided to trot off and find our own way to where we'd been told we were going. We rode most of the way on Artillery limbers but when we left them we couldn't find our way to our cookers or transport lines at all, so after wandering about for hours we eventually settled down in an abandoned Fritz train for the night at 'Fay'.

About daylight we heard some of our Battalion going by so joined them up and found that we'd been very near our destination all the time. After breakfast we had a sleep till dinnertime and in the afternoon we had a bit of a clean up.

We stayed there that day and next day about 2pm we moved about 5 miles forward to a place not a great way to the left of 'Eterpigny'. We rigged up shelters in an old trench and spent a fairly decent night and stayed in the trench next day. In the evening the Hun got on to us with gas shells and drove us out of our home for a while and made us wear our masks. When he quietened down we came back and slept till 5am on 3rd September.

September 3rd 1918

About 7am we moved off and got to a village called 'Halle' on the Somme, and not far on the left of "Peronne' and just behind 'Mont St Quentin' which was a village on very high ground.

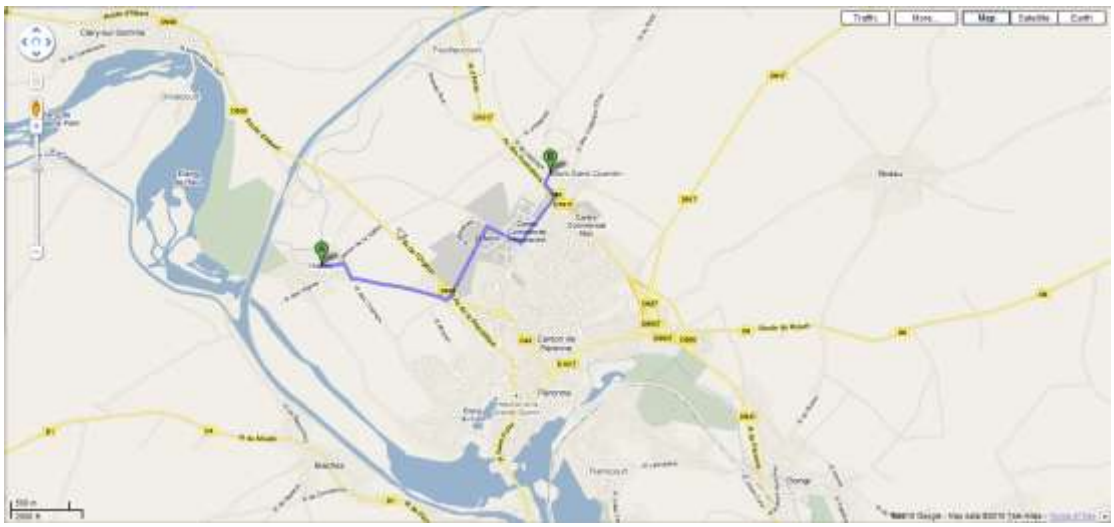


A - Éterpigny (Somme, Picardy, France). B - Halles, Péronne, France

It's no longer a village only bricks and twisted and broken iron and wood remain. I made a cushy little dugout in the trench we occupied but as usual it was only used for 1 night.

September 4th 1918

On evening of 4th September we moved 2,000 yards to a trench on left of Mont St Quentin where we had to dig possies (a place, position) for ourselves.



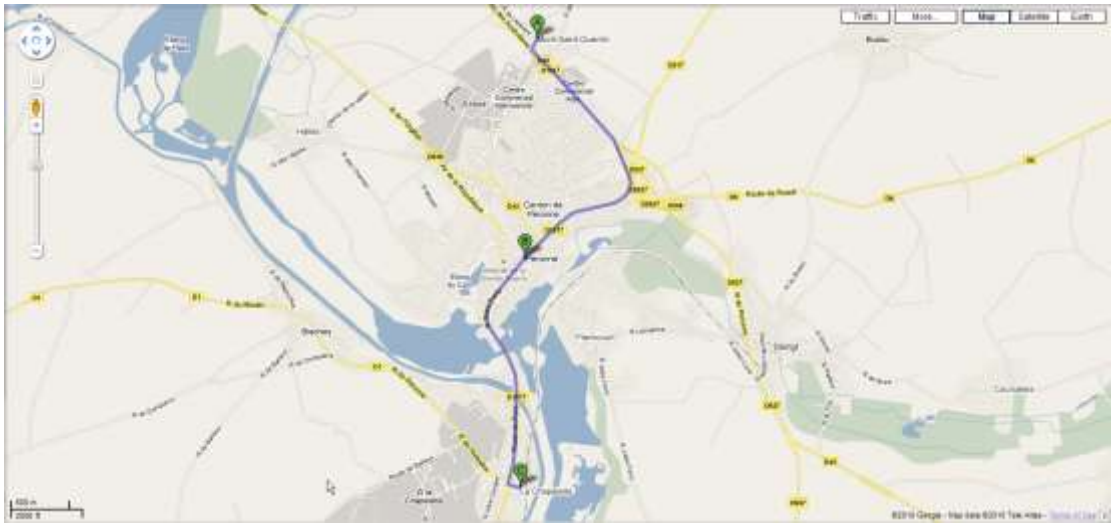
A - Halles, Péronne, France. B - Mont-Saint-Quentin, Péronne, France

It was quiet as far as Hun shelling was concerned and we didn't have much chance to have a decent sleep. The front line troops drove the Hun farther back on 5th September and he began to retreat at the double.

September 5th 1918

On evening of 5th September we moved through 'Peronne'[32] to near 'Le Mesnil'. The Hun was shelling the road in the town of Peronne and it was rather rotten with gas in that vicinity. We did sweat to some order with our gas masks on and going like one thing.

When we arrived at a spot on the road near 'Le Mesnil' we were told to get what sleep we could, as we were to advance at daylight. We slept a bit and about 5am went forward 3,000 yards to a sunken road near 'La Chapelette'.



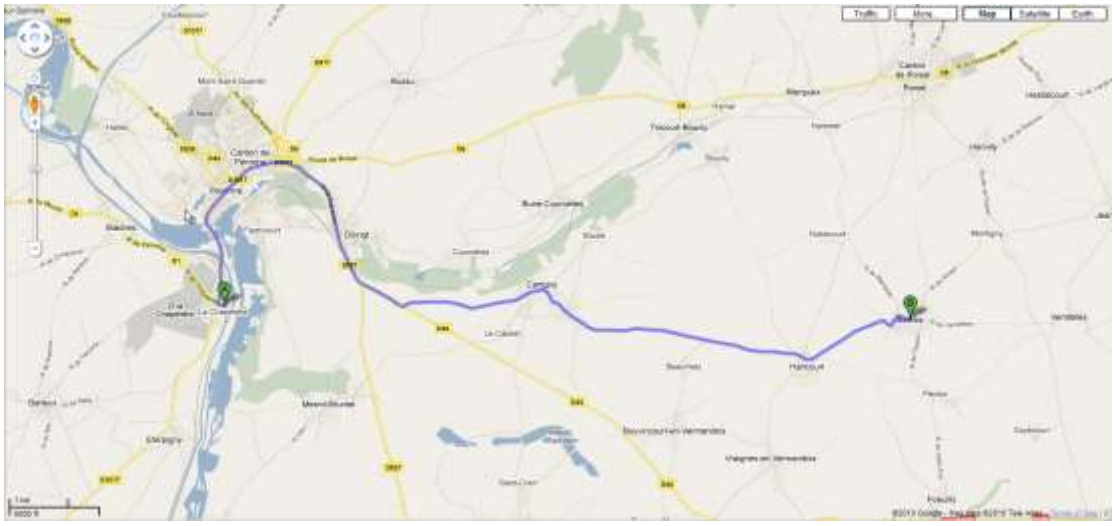
A - Mont-Saint-Quentin, Péronne, France. B - Péronne, France. C - La Chapelette, Péronne, France.

A German Headquarters of an Army Corp had been here but there was hardly a souvenir left and most of the huts had been burned and the houses and deep dugouts blown up.

Fritz made a special business of burning and blowing things up in his retreat and I reckon the railways had been so destroyed as to make it necessary to pull every metal up and put new ones in. His method of destruction was to break every metal at the joint by explosives and 95 percent of the rails were broken or twisted.

September 7th 1918

We stayed a day and night in the sunken road and about 7am on 7th September moved forward to 'Bernes'.



A - La Chapelette, Péronne, France. B - Bernes, Somme, Picardy, France

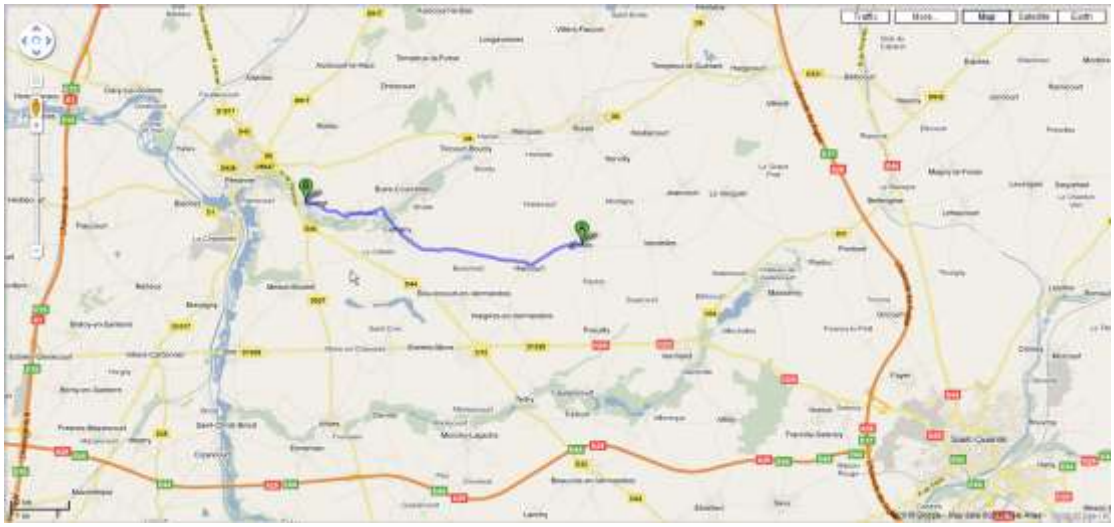
We came under fire after going about 5,000 yards. It was only whiz-bangs and 4 inch but they were nasty. Somehow no one was hunting our party.

After 'Bernes' we were under machine gun fire and our objective was a trench about 300 yards in front of the village, but of course they went too far by about 1,500 yards so that our left flank was in the air, so we had to retire to our objective and so connect[32] up with the division on our left.

The Hun used a great number of shells but there were surprisingly few casualties. We stayed here for a night till 3pm on 8th September. We got flooded out on 2nd night in it and had to make new possies. It was fairly quiet around our particular part of the trench. We kept getting disappointed as to being relieved here. First we heard we'd be relieved on 8th and then on 9th but it wasn't till evening of 10th September that we were relieved by the 4th Division.

September 10th 1918

Fritz gave us a demonstration of fireworks just before we left. First he started firing all sorts of flares from white to green and dark red, in fact almost every colour of the rainbow. We thought it was for his artillery to pin, but he took a long time to reply and we almost began to think he was getting rid of his spare flares. After about 5 minutes wait his artillery responded, and instead of shelling us he shelled his own men and right back behind them. He must have fired many hundred shells in about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour and scarcely one came near our lines. It was amusing to watch but certainly would not have been if he'd lifted his barrage on to our position. We got away without hindrance and had to march about six miles to some trenches between 'Le Mesnil' and 'Doingt' and about 2 miles from Peronne.



A - Bernes, Somme, Picardy, France. B - Doingt, France

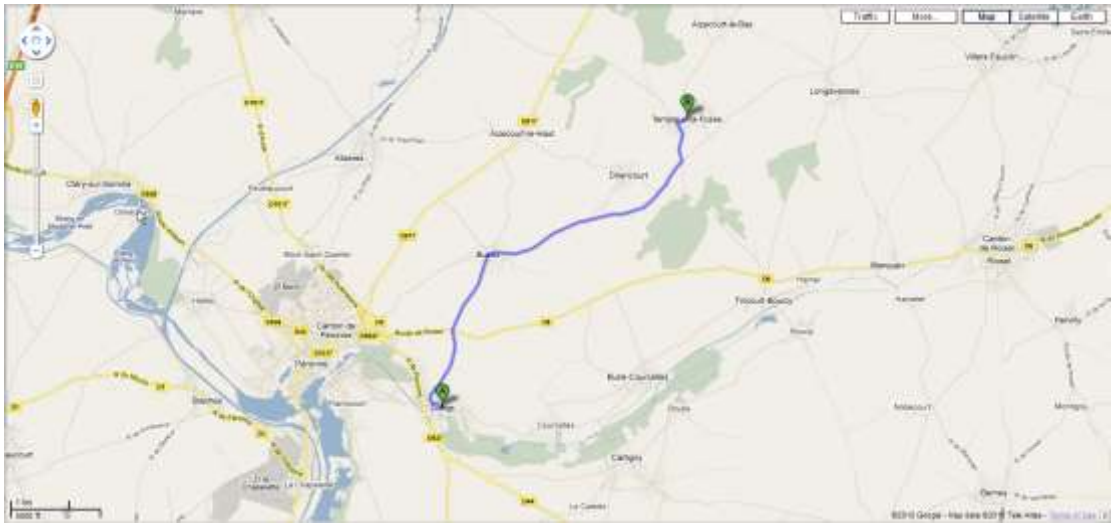
We had a roof over the trench to sleep under the first night but next day we made ourselves decent dugouts that were really cushy. We had not much to do. Mostly Lewis guns and other classes and a little drill occasionally. One day we went to see our Divisional concert party near 'Peronne'. They weren't too bad.

While there we saw two immense Hun aeroplane bombs. They are 13 foot long and 4 foot 6 inches round and weigh about 3,000 pounds and contain a ton of explosive – no wonder whole buildings, right down to the cellars, are blown down by them.

We also went to see a concert given by another Divisional party and they were really good. I've seen many a show in civilian life that wasn't a patch on it, and after paying too. The concert halls are generally large huts with a stage built in one end. This particular one had many holes through it made by shrapnel but it served quite well.

September 27th 1918

On September 27th we moved forward once again to a trench not far from 'Templeux' and about 3,000 yards from 'Roisel'.



A - Doingt, France. B - Templeux-la-Fosse, France.

We had a miserable night there and next morning I was detailed to go with the 8th Tank Battalion[33] in the big stunt which was coming off on morning of 29th. There were 4 tanks to work with our Battalion and one man from each Company went with them. Most of the tanks have a name painted on the front but the one I was with did not. It was just plain H31.

September 29th 1918

At 6am on 29th our guns broke out into a terrific bombardment and we went forward about 6.15. We were to go through the Yanks after they'd gone a certain distance and after we'd gone a few kilos we came under shellfire and got two men wounded, one Sergeant and the Driver. Then a Lance Corporal took charge and drove as well as gave orders. He was a Scottie and well deserves a decoration for his work that day, but I don't suppose he'll get one. We just got to the Hindenburg Line when a dense fog came on, so dense that you could not see 10 feet. Then things got somewhat mixed, but kept on along the Black road to 'Bellicourt'.

A – Roisel. B - Bellicourt, France

The Hun was firing machine guns wildly and blindly into the fog but the bullets flew wide and high. When we got through the village we stopped on the road to fill up with petrol. The Infantry and Artillery were both here, the latter got right out in front of the Infantry and Tanks. The fog mixed things hopelessly for a while and while it lasted there was no artillery fire to speak of from the Hun or us. However, it lifted as suddenly as it came on and there was the Hun standing to his whiz-bang guns only about 500 yards away and didn't he start to blaze at us.

The Artillery had to gallop out of action and the Infantry to scatter, and the tanks had to get under way as quickly as possible. But at such range and shooting over sights like a rifle sight the Hun gunners couldn't miss. He made a special target of the tanks of course and 3 of them were knocked out by direct hits in no time and caught fire as they always do when hit badly. One tank crew got burnt to death and 3 out of the 4 tanks that were with our Battalion were knocked out. The one I was in escaped and went for the village of 'Nauroy' by itself and we only got 4 Huns out of a dugout and saw one killed that a few stray Yanks must have dealt with.

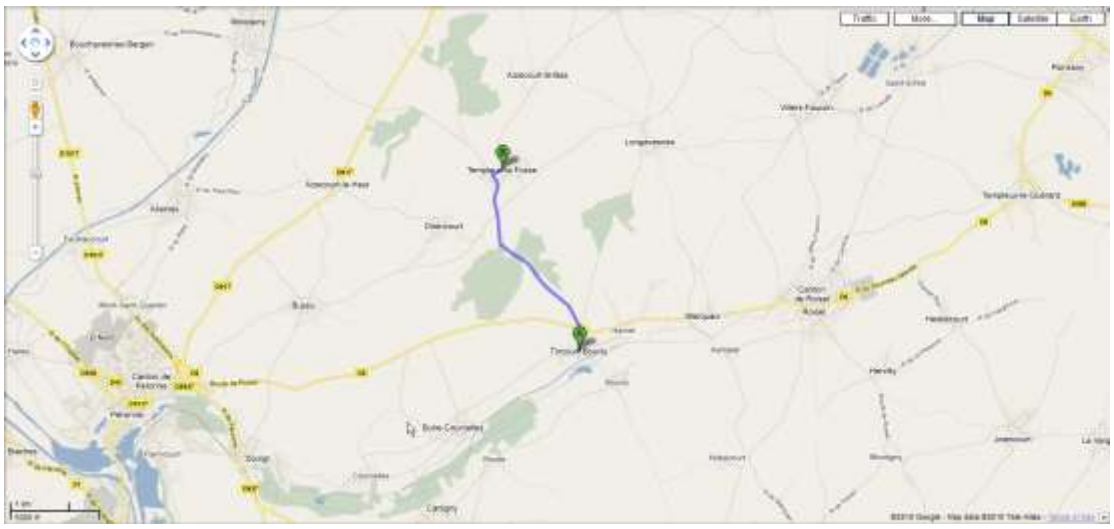
A - Bellicourt, France. B - Nauroy, France

Those Yanks got lost and went right past Fritz's guns and machine guns in the fog and were no doubt taken prisoners in the end. There is a great underground canal that runs under 'Bellicourt' and the Hun had various entrances into it from the Hindenburg Line and also into a sunken road so that he could come up behind our troops after they'd gone over him and he did this to the people on our left. Our counter attack finally took the line and went past it. After the tank I was in had patrolled the village a while our Infantry came up and then we went back to the rear, but the tank wasn't to get through altogether, and it last got into a sunken road and couldn't get forward or back and in its struggles took fire. We left it there and incidentally most of our equipment. I lost everything but my rifle and gas mask and spare water bottle, which I was carrying on me. We had then to march back to 'Tincourt Wood' and it rained most of the way out and I was somewhat wet.

A -Nauroy, France. B - Tincourt-Boucly, France.

I slept in a tent that night which was spread on the ground and part of it wrapped round me. In spite of its dampness I had a good rest and took no harm from it.

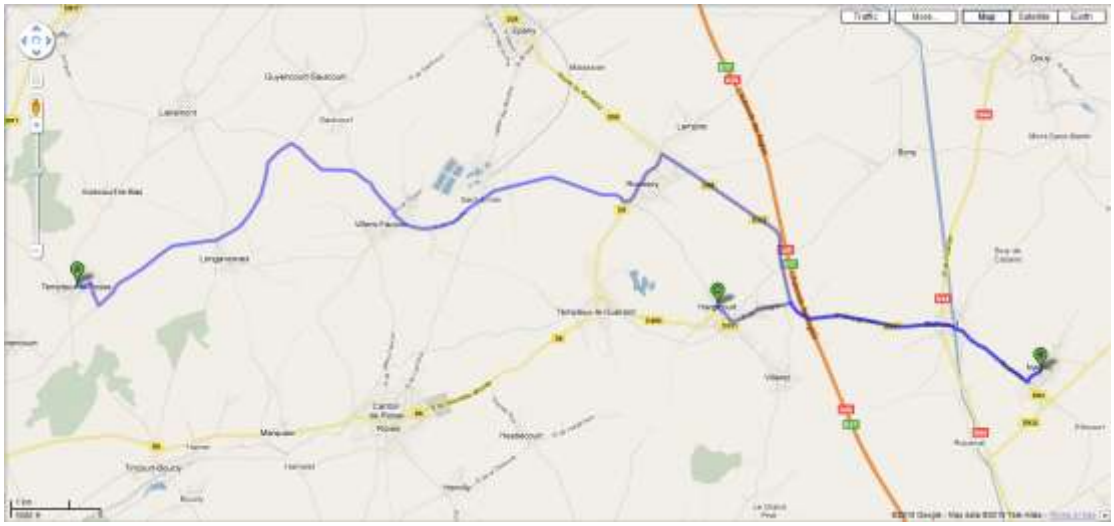
On 30th September I went back to 'Templeux' and reported at Brigade Headquarters, then stayed the night with some of the Nucleus who were guarding Hun prisoners.



A - Tincourt-Boucly, France. B - Templeux-la-Fosse, France.

October 1st 1918

On October 1st I went up to the Battalion near 'Nauroy'. They had had a bad cutting up on the 30th partly by our own guns. We got relieved that evening by 2nd Division and went back to a trench near 'Hargicourt'.



A - Templeux-la-Fosse, France. B -Nauroy, France. C - Hargicourt, France

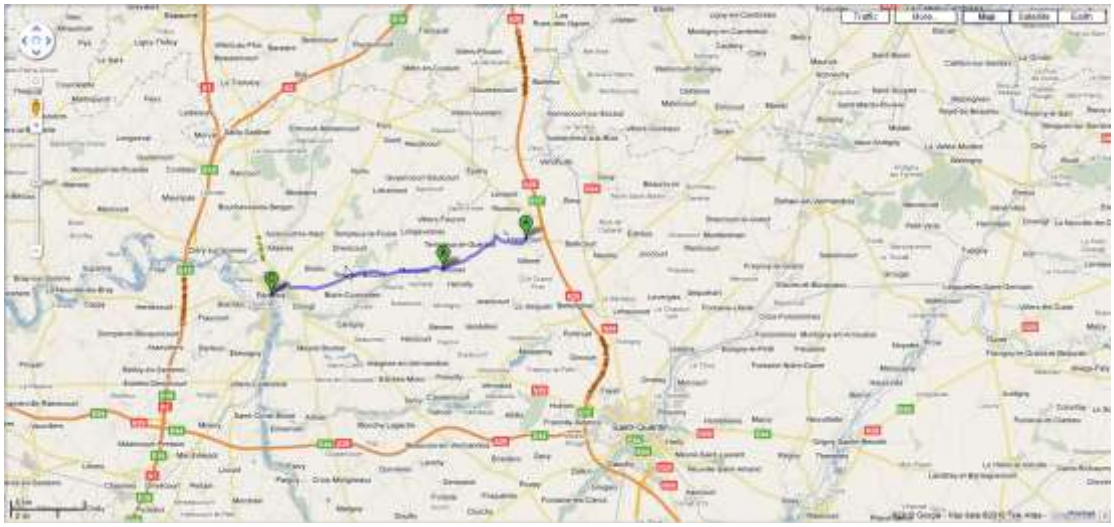
It had been occupied by the Yanks and the stuff they had left behind was appalling. All sorts of equipment, lots of bully and other stuff such as ground flares. The Hun apparently fought hard here for there was still a number of dead about the place.

October 2nd 1918

On October 2nd we went back to little dugouts and shelters near 'Roisel' and stayed there till 7th October. There was practically nothing to do.

October 7th 1918

At 2pm on 7th we moved out and marched to Peronne[34].



A - Hargicourt, France. B – Roisel. C – Peronne France.

We stayed one night in a hut and next day entrained at 8am. After a 9 hours journey we detrained at 'Oisement' and marched to 'Ramburelles' to decent billets, or rather ours was.

A - Péronne, France. B - Oisemont, Somme, Picardy. C - Ramburelles, Picardy, France

A lot of the others were anything but decent mainly on account of the smell from the usual manure heap in the yard. It rained a lot here but we did practically nothing. The Battalion was amalgamated with the 32nd[35] here, after they'd been on strike a week. I was glad to see them come round at last, as otherwise we would have been entirely split up throughout the AIF.

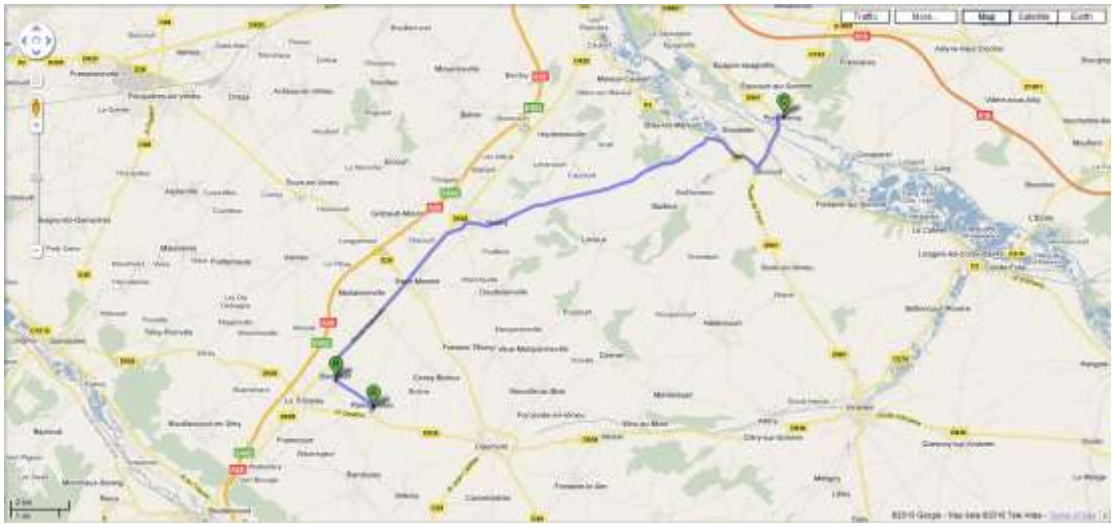
After being here about a month the frosts came on and it was bitterly cold for days on end. I spent about 13 hours in bed each night, as there was nothing to do but eat and sleep most of the time. We could get leave to "Abbeville' but having no means of transport but walking, there wasn't a rush for it. There was also a fair sized village called 'Blangy' which I visited. It was about 7 to 8 kilos. While at 'Ramburelles' the Armistice was signed, but in such a dead alive place we hardly realised the war was over.

We had some sports while here and one or two reviews. One of them on the 23rd November was very good. The whole Brigade with Machine gun and pioneer Battalions were on one parade ground and looked well.

November 26th 1918

On 26th November we marched to 'Biencourt', which was about 9 miles by the route we took. It is about a mile from the main 'Abbeville' and 'Blaggy' road. We were only billeted one night there and about 6pm on the 27th we moved out to march to 'Pont-Remy', which was about 7 miles.

It was raining heavily when we started but the troops were happy and sang as we moved out. We were glad to be moving anywhere away from the miserable villages of the Somme. We arrived at 'Pont-Remy' about 10pm and immediately got our overcoats out of our packs, as it was very cold.



A - Ramburelles, Picardy. B – Biencourt. C - Pont-Remy France.

We were marched into a sort of yard, somewhat damp too, and there we remained all night waiting for our train. It came along about 6am on 28th November and we didn't take long to get ourselves into it – about 28 men to a truck. We then got our blankets and were soon as cosy as possible even though we were crowded. The train moved out about 6.30am and made good progress till we got to 'Chaulnes' where for some unexplained reason we were detained from 10am till midnight. There were several trains detained there and next to ours was a ration train, which someone broke into, and there was bread and jam flying in all directions. Someone also got several kegs of rum and almost the whole of the troops got drunk. Our truck was about the only one on the whole train, which had no one drunk on it.

Our train moved out at 12.15am and we arrived at 'Cambrai' about daylight, but I didn't bother to see even what could be seen from the train. We arrived at 'Bertry' at 7.30am and there detrained and marched to 'Busigny', which is a fairly large place and not badly damaged.

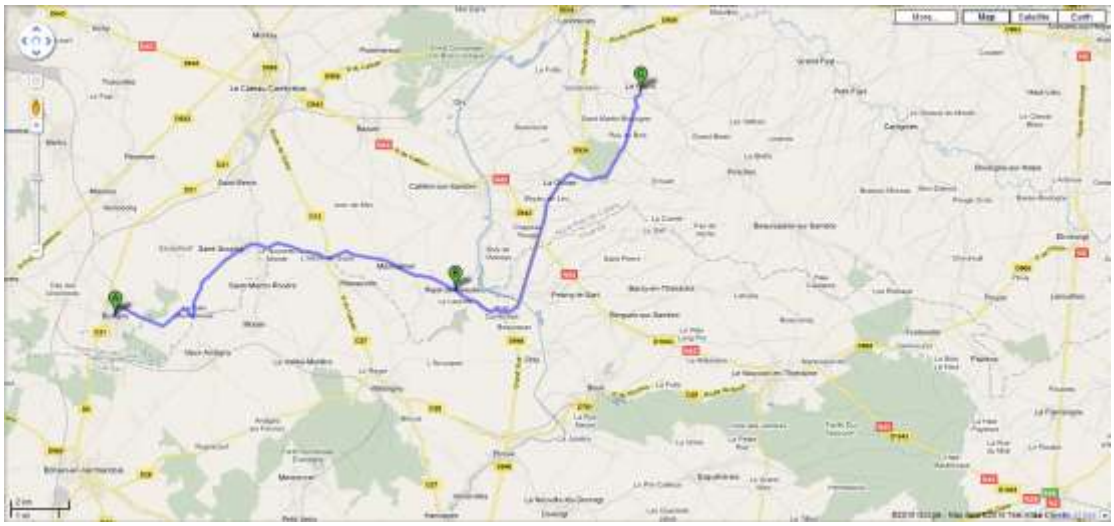
A - Pont-Remy France. B - Chaulnes, Somme, Picardy. C – Cambrai. D – Bertry. E - Busigny, France

There were very few civilians there. We were billeted in houses and fairly comfortable and had great fires. The gardens about contained an abundance of vegetables, which we availed ourselves of and boiled. We did nothing to speak of there.

December 6th 1918

December 6th we marched to 'Rejet-de-Beaulieu' (about 10 miles). We were very tired when we got there but in spite of having a comfortable billet I didn't sleep well.

Next day 7th we marched to 'Le Favril' about 5 miles.



A – Busigny. B - Rejet-de-Beaulieu. C - Le Favril, France.

There were 17 of us billeted in a loft there, which was somewhat the worse for having tried conclusions with bombs or shells. However, we had a fire all the time and had nothing to do at all. It rained a great deal too. I salvaged a German rifle here and plenty of ammunition and we went to a near by wood and did some firing. I found the Hun rifle a very good one to shoot with and the bullets will penetrate more than ours. We often made the barrel like a hot stove. We were here till 18th then marched to 'Avesnes' 12 miles. Soon after leaving 'Le Favril' we passed very near to 'Landrecies' which is historic on account of the first Victoria Cross of the war being won there. 'Avesnes' proved to be a large place and not at all damaged. I went inside the church and found it very beautiful, but everything was a terrible price and a small candle cost 1 shilling or more. We were billeted in huts there for the one night and next day.

19th December 1918

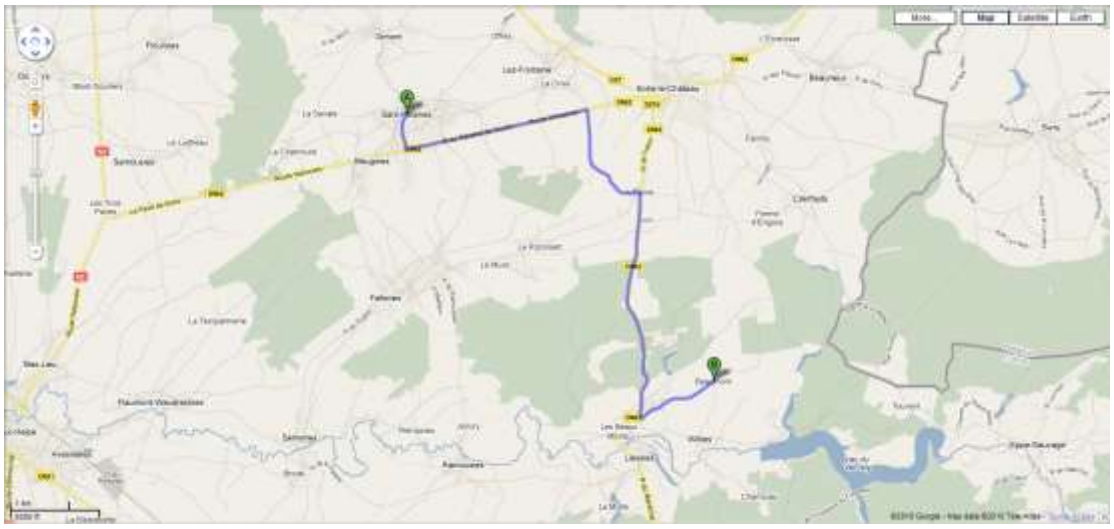
19th December – marched to 'Sars-Poteries' 6 miles. We were billeted in houses and were very comfortable, some of the men even had beds with sheets and all on them. It rained a great deal and on Christmas Eve we had a light fall of snow, the first this winter. We had a spread on Christmas Day. The whole Battalion was seated in one of the poterie works and we had a fine turnout altogether. We had our Divisional Commander present and other 'Head' and also the only living VC in our Brigade. There was nothing much doing except small route marches and Battalion Guard came round about every 16 days and guard is one of the things I detest, not that it's hard, but it seems so silly marching up and down a 'beat' for 2 hours then 4 hours off and so on. Our Company got hold of a nice 'hall' and there was dancing every night for those who cared to go.

1st January 1919

We had sports on New Years Day, the most interesting item being a wood chopping competition. It was a beastly cold day too. There were pictures every evening and I went to every change of programme.

10th January 1919

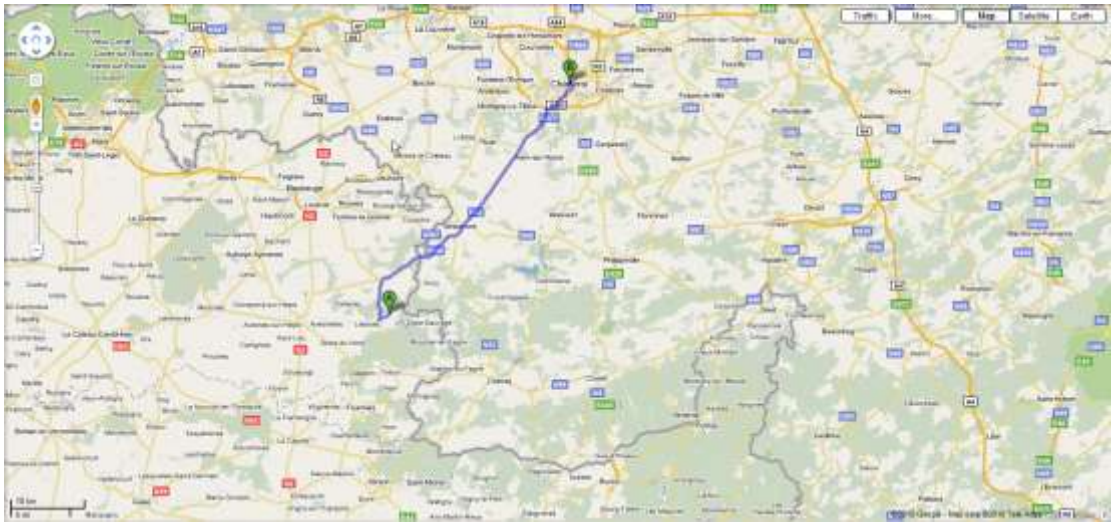
On **January 10th 1919** I and others left the Battalion for the last time en route for 'Aussie' and weren't we glad. Buses took us as far as a fair sized town call 'Beaumont' where we were billeted in a large and cold factory.



A - Sars-Poteries. B – Beaumont, France.

We only had one blanket so I didn't relish the idea of a cold night on the floor. Accordingly two other chaps and I went looking for a house at which we could sleep but all beds were taken up, except at the best places and of course they were for 'Officers only'. However after visiting about half the places in the town we at last retraced our steps homeward. Then by great good luck we got a room to sleep in right next to the factory. It was warm and that was the main thing.

We put in two nights there and on 12th we went by train to 'Charleroi' in Belgium.



A - Beaumont, France. B - Charleroi, Belgium

It is a fine large place and I was surprised at the number of people about. I went to the pictures in the evening and saw the war over again on film. Still they were good pictures.

13th January 1919

On 13th we entrained for 'Le Havre'. We pulled out of the Central Station about 10am and reached 'Mons' about 8pm, where we stayed about 3 hours. We crossed the French Frontier about 7am on 14th and got the 'Arras' at 5pm and another long stop. We arrived at 'Doullons' at 4am on 15th and stayed there till 10am. Oh! It was such a fast train (I don't think). After leaving 'Doullons' we made fairly good progress to 'Amiens' and on to a place called 'Beauvis'. Then about 8pm a froggy driver took us and went at a terrific pace. The trucks jumped and swayed alarmingly at times. He got us to our destination at 1.30am on 16th and we didn't want to get there till daylight. We were just comfortably asleep. However, we had to detrain and march about a mile to the camp at 'Harfleur' and were soon fixed up in tents and by 2.30 were asleep again.

A - Charleroi, Belgium. B – Mons. C - Arras, France. D - Doullens. E - Beauvais. F - Le Havre, France

We stayed till 6pm on 17th then marched to 'Le Havre' and embarked on the paddle steamer '*Monas Queen*'. She sailed about 11pm and we arrived off 'Weymouth' United Kingdom about 6am on 18th and didn't disembark till 8am. We then got some tea and buns

and marched to the station where we entrained for 'Sutton Veny'. We arrived there about 1pm and had a 2-½ mile march to camp. It was a nice bright day though.
We stayed in the camp till 24th during which time we got new clothes etc. It was very monotonous indeed. On morning of 24th we all went on 14 days leave. I went to Manchester via Bristol and Crewe. It took from 8.30am till 5pm and I was dead tired of it by the time I arrived there. I found Manchester just the same smoky old place but of course I was made welcome at 'Withington'. I stayed there a few days then went to stay at 'Timperley' about 20 minutes from Manchester and in Cheshire. I have very good friends there. From there I went back to Withington and next day to Liverpool where I stayed over a weekend and saw everything I could see in the time. I visited Port Sunlight where the great soap works are which is a very clean place.

From Liverpool I went back to Manchester and out to Timperley and stayed another 2 days there – then back to Withington. Next day I had to make my way back to camp. I left Manchester at 8.50am and got to Warminster station at 5pm and got a motor out to the camp. It was rotten coming back after such a good holiday. However, the days were nice and bright but the nights were bitterly cold. The temperature stood at freezing by day or thereabouts and at night went down much lower. In parts they had 33 degrees of frost.

We remained in the camp till 19th and had nothing to do. Some of us used to go to Warminster in an evening for exercise more than anything else. We also went to the pictures and some of them were very good. It didn't seem quite as monotonous as the few days before we went on leave, still it was bad and slow enough.

On 19th February we marched to Codford to No. 3 Camp and it was just the same as the other places. One thing about the Military is they have a great eye for beauty as anyone who has seen the camps and the positions they are in will admit, but I suppose it wouldn't do to have the troops camped near a town – they might learn bad habits or get into mischief.

What odds? The war is over and won and we'll soon be home again and forget all about the 'Little Wooden Huts' and other things that after all are nothing when one thinks of what we went through in France.

Arrived Melbourne 21st March 1919.

RAYMOND PYE
1896-1984

An Account
of the
Battle of The Somme
1916- 1917

It was with mingled feelings that we received word that we were to proceed to the Somme in October 1916. Accordingly we left the quiet sector of the trenches at Armentières and after a few days rest entrained from Baillieul and arrived at Longpre in the Department de Somme.

We detrained and set out to march somewhere. No one except the CO's seemed to know where. After several hours marching we were pretty well 'fed up' with it all, as we'd had no hot meal or proper rest since the previous day. And to cap it all, it began to rain. We were fairly well loaded too and gradually the men began to drop out and throw things away. Finally we arrived at a miserable village about 11pm and after a feed of stew we were soon in bed. The village was called 'Buses' and we spent several days there. Then we got buses to Buire, which was considerably nearer the 'front'. We had heard a lot and read about the 'Somme Front' and expected it to be rough. Anyway our billets were 'rough' for a start and personally I was glad to move on next day towards the line. We marched about 5 miles and were then about where the first troops hopped over in the 'Battle of the Somme'. From there on the whole aspect of the country was one of utter desolation. Houses and villages had entirely disappeared. After the artillery had done with a village what was left was used for firewood, and the bricks for road repairs.

We finished our march on a hillside where there were shelters made of trench covers. We could see now what war was, even the woods were almost blown away and certainly every tree had untold pieces of shrapnel in its trunk. Next day we proceeded to the trenches at 'Flers'. We won't forget our first experience of the 'Somme' trenches in a hurry. The communication trench was called 'Fish Alley'. Possibly the man who named it had to swim along it. The first half of it was crossed at many points by signal wire, which seemed specially put there to trip over, or entangle your rifle in. There was constantly a call of 'wire over head' or 'wire underfoot'. About halfway along it the wires were less frequent, but then we had mud to contend with. And the Hun was shelling in his usual persistent way up ahead of us.

We were now about 2,000 yards from the front line and the mud was getting worse until at last it was knee deep and very sticky and it took us all of our time to drag our feet out of it. We at last stopped and were told to make ourselves comfortable as possible as it was the support trench our Company was to occupy for 2 days. What a contrast it was to the comfortable trenches we'd been used to. No dugouts, no duckboards, in fact no anything. The Hun was throwing shells about in a haphazard fashion and some were not far away. Some men dug funk-holes (a place of refuge from something feared) into the sides of the trench and others just sat on a ledge with the inevitable waterproof sheet as cover and tried to sleep. Next day on ration fatigue a party of us were spotted by the Hun and he mighty soon had us in the prone position with whiz-bangs. And on the way back with the rations he again shelled the sap (deep, narrow trench) but we were all lucky. That night he shelled our trench and we had a few casualties there.

After that we went back to a place about ½ a mile from Montauban and were told to make ourselves comfortable. The place had at least 6 inches of mud all over it and it was the very limit after our rough time in the trenches. However, there was no where else to go so we had to hunt around for shovels and picks to dig a sort of home out of the mud. We spent 4 days there during which time we went on road fatigue between Longeval and High Wood. It rained more heavily than usual one day and when we got back to our miserable homes, most of them were flooded.

From there we went to the 2,000-yard line. Our Company's position was this time just in front of a light Howitzer Battery and we often got shelled when the Hun was trying to put the battery out of action. We had a few casualties. After staying a few days here a party of us were detailed for fatigue for the RGA. Our job was unloading 8mm and 9.2 shells from lorries on to a dump and reloading them into trucks on the light railway and then hauling them to the gun positions. Luckily most of the route was downhill. One truck caused some excitement one day by getting away with 10 shells on and bolting at a terrific pace down the incline. It somehow kept on the rails even at a turn and only lost 2 shells but finally collided with another truck and both loads were derailed. One section of the railway was in an appalling condition and almost every load left the rails and the wheels disappeared in the mud which was anything up to a foot deep between the sleepers.

It rained a great deal about this time and the roads were all in an awful condition even though there were always gangs of men repairing them. The rest of our Battalion had gone out to billets and so about 9 o'clock one night we moved out to march to Fricourt. Never will we forget that miserable march. As soon as we were on the road the sloppy mud was over our boots and for about ½ a mile near Montauban the water was almost up to our knees and as there was no better track we had to splash through it. Then it started to rain very heavily and by the time we got to Fricourt we were like drowned rats and a more miserable lot of men it would have been hard to find. It was 1am when we got into Bow Huts and took our wet puttees and boots off and tried to sleep a little. We did get about 4 hours rest of a sort with no blankets and next morning again had to march. Our boots were ringing wet and the sloppy mud had worked into the boots and consequently our feet got very sore before we got to Merricourt. We were a sorry looking lot with our three weeks growth on and felt what we looked. But our troubles were about over as the buses picked us up at Mericourt and we went to Vignacourt to billets. We were quite happy once in the buses and sang most of the time.

Our billets were pretty decent and after our three weeks exceedingly rough time they were palaces. We had a fairly quiet and easy time for about 10 days there. The weather was getting colder and we had several frosts, then on 18th November we awoke to find the countryside under a mantle of snow. It was the first snow a lot of our chaps had seen in their lives.

We left Vignacourt that morning by bus and occupied billets at Ribemont. Our billet there was a stable and smelt and looked as if the animals had been turned out to let us in. But we were getting used to that sort of thing and it didn't worry us at all. Next day we marched to a camp near Fricourt. It was composed of the Bow Huts, which proved such a boon to troops during the terrible winter. We only stayed the night there and next morning had to march to Trones Wood. Our encampment there was made of trench covers spread over holes. Each one sheltered about 8 men and packed like sardines at

that. We had to carry duckboards each night from an engineer's dump, which was about a mile nearer the line.

Our first trip seemed awful. The narrow duckboard track was very slippery and to fall off it was to go knee deep in sloppy mud or water. We just got to where our heavy batteries were when they opened up a heavy barrage. The noise was absolutely stunning in its intensity. It was the greatest noise I'd every heard and I'd have given anything to get away from it. It was just as well the Hun didn't shell heavily too. As it was we had a couple of casualties. By the time we got back from the forward dump, called 'Needle Dump', a thick fog had come on, and when we were about 400 yards from our camp we lost the track where there were no duckboards to follow. It took a couple of hours to find ourselves and by that time everyone was feeling anything but happy and we'd never really been more that 600 yards from the camp.

After a day or so we went into the line. Our Battalion was in reserve and were in trenches round Needle Dump. There was Needle Trench, Cow Trench and Windmill Trench. C Company was in the latter. It was a comparatively deep and dry trench when we went into it and all went well for the first night. But next night it began to rain and by morning of the second day the sides of the trench began to slide in and all our little shelters, which were miniature caves in the sides of the trench, collapsed. I just got out of mine when it fell in and buried all my equipment but I dug it out. Everyone was in a like case. It rained a great deal on the third night and our trench was more like a muddy drain by then. Nowhere was the mud less than a foot deep and in one place the water and mud would have run into our gumboots had we walked through it. Some men walked along the top but they hadn't done it many times before the Hun started to shell with 5.93. He got the range exactly and we lost 23 men from our Company that day, and most of them serious cases. Most of us were sitting up on a ledge on the third and fourth nights with our legs almost up to the knees in water or mud. I don't remember a more miserable 4 days than those were. The Battalion to which we were on reserve had an even worse time if that were possible and a great many of them got 'trench feet' and some had to get out as best they could. They were coming out with sandbags tied round their feet as their boots were too small. Some used spades to help them along. We got relieved on the evening of the 4th day and went back to Adelaide Camp at Montauban. The men were weary from want of sleep and we got to the vicinity of Trones Wood some didn't care whether they went on or not and to make matters worse we got somewhat lost. The road was little better; the mud was whipped up into sloppiness by the heavy traffic, which was at that time continuous. There was a place near Adelaide Camp called 'Cosy Corner', goodness only knows why for it was anything but cosy. Like everything else that whole winter the whole place was mud. Adelaide Camp was the very limit. From the road to the huts was like a sea of mud and was really dangerous if you got off the track as in many instances a large shell hole had got filled with thin mud and you weren't to know it was deeper than the rest. To guard against anyone falling into these, there were men stationed along the tracks as guides. The distance was only about 300 yards but every inch was deep mud. Many a poor mule and horse was lost in it. They would go almost out of sight if they fell. It must have been a nightmare to try and drive a limber or wagon through it. Once in the huts we were better off but we were crowded. However, after a drink of hot tea with rum in it, we settled down for the night and stayed there till about noon the next day.

Next morning our hearts went into our boots when we heard we were going into the line again that afternoon. However, there was no help for it so in we went as cheerful as may be. We were again in Windmill Trench but had a comparatively quiet time for 2 days then we went into the front line at a place called Zenith Trench. Just as we got to a sunken road they opened a heavy barrage right across our front and about 400 yards ahead. Our CO told us to take shelter in the road and we did till it eased a bit. One Company who didn't wait had some casualties. After passing the support line we had to cross a place known as 'Lark Hill'. It was no lark to cross it and you could follow the track by the trail of dead men along it.

Fritz never left us entirely alone there for 3 days, but somehow we had very slight casualties considering the amount of stuff he used on us. We had very cold weather and couldn't get a decent hot meal. Enemy aeroplanes were rather active about this time and repeatedly flew over our lines at a low altitude and directed the enemy artillery on to us. On a fine day both ours and enemy planes were very numerous and I remember seeing 80 odd machines in sight one evening.

We got relieved on the evening of the third day and for a wonder the Hun artillery was quiet till we got about 1,000 yards from the front line. It was a moonlight night too and we were utterly tired out after 5 days and nights without rest or decent sleep. We got back to Windmill Trench for the night and stayed there till next evening, then went back to Trones Wood. We were only out a couple of days when we had to go into reserves again to act as reserves to the front line Battalion who were doing a raid.. We were not required so only stayed 24 hours and again went out to Trones Wood. We had a double issue of rum that night and most of the men got very merry on it. The Bow Hut camps round Trones Wood were in an almost as bad condition as at Montauban as far as mud was concerned. But the Somme battle area was entirely composed of mud that winter, that is, where it wasn't water.

After doing a few days fatigue for the engineers who were making huts, we marched back to Adelaide Camp. It was somewhat better round the huts by then as duckboard tracks had been laid along the front of each row of huts. But the track in was not better and it was quite impossible to get in without going over your boot tops in mud. We were on fatigue from here mostly carrying duckboards and timber for hut building round Trones Wood. It was bitterly cold and snowed several times. The YMCA and Aussie Comfort Fund was a great boon while on fatigue as we could get a hot drink any time. The 'Comfort Fund' had places established along the routes into the line where men going in and coming out could get a drink and that is the time it was appreciated.

From Adelaide Camp we went out by train to Derancourt. That was just a few days before Christmas Day. Our billets there were poor and the village was an extra poor specimen of its kind. We have a very poor and miserable Christmas and New Year there. All there was in the eating line was 4 tinned puddings of 8lb each per Company and a few tins of fruit. Our platoon was lucky and got two puddings, which cut out a fairly decent issue per man. But it was altogether voted a rotten show. We even had a better turnout than that in Egypt the previous Christmas.

About the 3rd of January we marched further back. This time to Coisy. It was done in two days, the first took us to La Haoussoye on the Amiens, Albert Road and next day we reached our destination and a very miserable village it was and of course Amiens, only

about 5 miles away, was strictly out of bounds. It seemed to us that the main idea of the powers that were, was to get as much work as possible out of us in the line and as much drill as possible when out. Anyway we drilled for some days then about 8th of January we again set out for a tour of fatigue and trench life in the same old area round Trones Wood. The first day we marched to 'Buire' and billeted for the night and went on again next day to Memetz Wood camp and next day got to Montauban (Adelaide Camp) again. We stayed there about 12 days and during that time were working on the roads sweeping the mud and water off them and cleaning out drains. It snowed a lot and on top of that we got severe frosts till the roads and everything else was like flint and it took the poor horses and mules all their time to stand up. Our comforts fund had a free Cocoa depot at the railway siding near our work and I think we'd have frozen only for them.

Food was very poor about this time. By the time we'd had our breakfast off our 3rd of a loaf and also cut our lunch out of it there wasn't anything left and very often there was only a small bit of bacon and then the 3rd of a loaf could have very easily been eaten for breakfast. There were hard biscuits sometimes, but as a rule they were made into porridge. The despised bully and biscuits would have been very welcome there and also pork and beans.

From here we again went into the line near Transloy. It was bitterly cold and the shell holes had about 8 inches to a foot of ice on them. We stayed 2 days in the trenches round Needle Dump and the sun hadn't even the power to melt the snow after shining for hours on it. The duckboard tracks were as slippery as ice and you'd be down before you knew it on them.

On 26th January we occupied the front line immediately on the left of 29 Division. That division had a stint at 5.30am on 27th and it was very successful. The Tommies went over under cover of a terrific barrage and were in the Hun line before he woke up to the fact they were coming. The shells had a terrific effect on the frozen ground, as they couldn't bury and so deaden the effect of their burst. The Hun shelled a great deal afterwards and continued all day and the following night.

The cold was so intense that it was impossible to get even a warm stew up to us and it arrived in petrol tins frozen solid. The bread was so hard as to be almost impossible to cut it and every bit of moisture froze. A pick and bag was the way to get water. A man would set out and get a bag of ice which would then have to be melted. But in the front line that couldn't be done and our only way of getting a drink was to get Tommy Cookers and melt ice in our mess tins. We contrived to make a drink of tea that way. About midnight on 27th one of our Company's sent a raiding party over but the Hun saw them coming and opened up with grenades and machine guns. But the party got back with only a couple of wounded.

The Battalion went out to the trenches round Needle Dump on evening of 28th January and next day out to Trones Wood. Volunteers were called to form a raiding platoon and were soon forthcoming. After a period of various fatigue jobs the Battalion went into the front line on the left of our old position. At Zenith Trench. About 2nd March the raiding platoon went over from Surrey Trench. They captured about 15 Huns and a machine gun besides inflicting casualties on the enemy. The Hun counter attacked the position about 8pm the same day but did no good at all. Our barrage caught him in the wire and he lost heavily.

We remained in the trench for 2 days more and were then relieved and went back to Needle Trench and next day to Trones Wood. The Battalion who relieved us got heavily shelled and had severe casualties. After some fatigue we went into the Flers line and on 16th went into the support line. On the morning of the 17th the line was advanced and the 31st Battalion went through Bapaume. Light horse patrol went in front. Our Battalion was in town very soon after the first troops to enter.

From there the Hun kept on retiring with our troops close on his heels. The Hun finally came to a standstill on the Hindenburg Line, which was very strongly held and wired in the vicinity of Bellicourt and Oueanf. Our Battalion occupied the front line there but it was very quiet. The Hun put up some very heavy bombardment at Bellicourt on the left of our position. We were 11 days on the front line without a hot meal. But we contrived to make a hot drink with the aid of Tommy Cookers. From the front line we went back to a reserve trench about ½ a mile from the front line and after a few days there we marched back to Bapaume. Fritz shelled the town and we were shifted outside the town and live in pillboxes.

After 3 weeks of long spelling fatigue our work was now ended and the weather was good. Thus ended the worst winter campaign we've every experienced.

PS This is an essay I sent in. I may be home as soon as it though.
Love from Ray

Reference:

Black and Gold – The History of the 29th Battalion, 1915-18 – by Ron Austin

[1] Page 9
[2] Page 10
[3] Page 12
[4] Page 13
[5] Page 18
[6] Page 23
[7] Page 26
[8] Page 27
[9] Page 34, 35
[10] Page 51
[11] Page 52
[12] Page 60
[13] Page 61
[14] Page 80
[15] Page 81
[16] Page 82
[17] Page 97
[18] Page 99
[19] Page 100
[20] Page 103
[21] Page 105
[22] Page 106
[23] Page 108
[24] Page 109
[25] Page 110
[26] Page 112
[27] Page 113
[28] Page 115, 116
[29] Page 121
[30] Page 150
[31] Page 151
[32] Page 153
[33] Page 156
[34] Page 161
[35] Page 162

Certified true copy W. W. Tracy Capt
late C Coy 29th Bn

Parents
Monday & Tuesday

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. 909 Name Pye, Raymond

Unit C COY. 29TH. BATTN.

29 th. Btn Joined on 9/7/15

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name?	1. Pye, Raymond
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? ...	2. In the Parish of ____ in or near the Town of Badger Creek in the ~~County of~~ near Healesville Vic.
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.)	3. not born British subj.
4. What is your age?	4. 18 yrs 11 mos
5. What is your trade or calling?	5. Labourer (Nursery)
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period?	6. no
7. Are you married?	7. no
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ...	8. Father Pye Francis H Healesville Vic.
9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ...	9. no
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incorrigible and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy?	10. no
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge	Outside area u S.C. R Pye 11. yes Emerald Rifle Club 4 mos.
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service?	12. yes
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds?	13. no
14. (*For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother*)— Do you understand that no separation allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with pay would reach eight shillings per day?	14. —
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever?	15. yes

PAY BOOK NO. 203793

parents consent

I, Raymond Pye do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

~~And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths three-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife.* † wife and children.~~

Date 9.7.15

Raymond Pye
Signature of person enlisted.

*This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 18 years of age.
† Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

D.277/1.15.—C.628.

CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER.

The foregoing questions were read to the person enlisted in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to by him.

~~I have examined his naturalization papers and am of opinion that they are correct.~~

(This to be struck out except in the case of persons who are naturalized British Subjects.)

Date 9/7/15

Signature of Attesting Officer. LIEUT. & I. STAFF.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY PERSON BEING ENLISTED.*

3, Raymond Pye swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Australian Imperial Force from 9th July 1915 until the end of the War, and a further period of four months thereafter unless sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed therefrom; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So Help Me, God.

Raymond Pye
Signature of Person Enlisted.

Taken and subscribed at Melbourne in the State of Victoria this ninth day July of the year 1915, before me—

Signature of Attesting Officer. LIEUT. & I. STAFF.

*A person enlisting who objects to taking an oath may make an affirmation in accordance with the Third Schedule of the Act, and the above form must be amended accordingly. All amendments must be initialed by the Attesting Officer.

3

Description of Pye Raymond on Enlistment.

Age 18 years 11 months.	DISTINCTIVE MARKS.
Height 5 feet 9 inches.	
Weight 114 lbs.	Vac 3 L arm
Chest Measurement 34½/37 inches.	Scar R calf
Complexion Ruddy	" R thigh
Eyes brown	" R Heel
Hair brown	mole neck
Religious Denomination Meth.	

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

I HAVE examined the above-named person, and find that he does not present any of the following conditions, viz.:—

Scrofula; phthisis; syphilis; impaired constitution; defective intelligence; defects of vision, voice, or hearing; hernia; hæmorrhoids; varicose veins, beyond a limited extent; marked varicocele with unusually pendent testicle; inveterate cutaneous disease; chronic ulcers; traces of corporal punishment, or evidence of having been marked with the letters D. or B.C.; contracted or deformed chest; abnormal curvature of spine; or any other disease or physical defect calculated to unfit him for the duties of a soldier.

He can see the required distance with either eye; his heart and lungs are healthy; he has the free use of his joints and limbs; and he declares he is not subject to fits of any description.

I consider him fit for active service.

Date 9th Jul 1915

Place Melbourne

Signature of Examining Medical Officer.
Capt. A.D.M.S.

CERTIFICATE OF COMMANDING OFFICER.

I CERTIFY that this Attestation of the above-named person is correct, and that the required forms have been complied with. I accordingly approve, and appoint him to C COY. 29TH. BATTN.

Date OCT. 19 1915 [BROADMEADOWS

Place

A W Purnell
C.O. 29th. Battn.
Commanding 8th. Infantry Brigade

D.377/6.15.—C.6577.

89.

A.I.F.
Army Form B103 Part I.

Service and Casualty Form.

PART I.

200 m—6/18—13244.

Nothing to be written in this Margin.

(1) PRESENT UNIT	~~20th~~ 32nd BATTALION.		(2) Regtl. No. 909.
(3) Present Rank	Pte.	(4) SURNAME	PYE.
(5) Decorations		(6) Christian Names.	Raymond.

Particulars.

P.B. No. 203793

(7) Date of Enlistment	9.7.15.	(8) Place of Enlistment	Melbourne, VIC.
(9) Age on Enlistment	18 Years 11 Months	(10) Any subsequent claim as to age after verification of Birth Certificate	Auth. C.R. Years / Months /
(11) Birthplace	Badger Creek, near Healesville, VIC.	(12) Religion	Meth.
		(13) If Married	No.
(14) Trade or Calling	Labourer (Nursery)	(15) If an Apprentice	No.
(16) Date of Embarkation from Australia	10.11.15.	(17) Whereabouts of Next of Kin, *i.e.* Australia or Abroad	AUST.
(18)			
(19)			
(20)		(21) Special Notification	

HANDED TO
ALEXANDRIA A.R.S
ALEXANDRIA 25.1.16

32ND BATTALION. A.I.F.
~~29 Bn A.I.F.~~

Army Form B. 103.

909

Casualty Form — Active Service.

Regiment or Corps ~~6th Bn 4th Div A.I.F.~~

Regimental No. 909 Rank Pte Name Pye Raymond

Enlisted (a) 9-7-15 Terms of Service (a) WAR & 4 MTHS Service reckons from (a) 9.7.15

Date of promotion to present rank } Date of appointment to lance rank } Numerical position on roll of N.C.Os. }

Extended Re-engaged Qualification (b)

	Report: Date	Report: From whom received	Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
1		C.O.M.H.	Embarked on H.T. [illegible]	Suez	7/10/15.	
2		"	EMRk to join R.E.F		16/6/16	ALEXANDRIA AP.9065
3		"	OC, Tr. s Dis mb ex Tunisian	Marseilles	23.6.16	LR5901
4	3/2/17	OC 29 Bn B213	Wounded in Action	Field	28.1.17	E6/5 (VL/25/10.2.17) D.O.4/1103
5	8/2/17	1. S.M.D C.C.S.	Adm - S.M. L.H. Leg.	"	28.1.17	AK.891/21
6	31/1/17	8 GH	" "	Rouen	31.1.17	AK.891/22
7	1/2/17	"	To England S.M. L.H. Leg		1.2.17	[illegible]
8	3/2/17	"Warilda"	" " "	Le Havre	3.2.17	AK.891/27 D.O.6/1266 AK.3083

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into Section D. Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.
(b) e.g., Signaller, Shoeing Smith, etc., etc., also special qualifications in technical Corps duties.

P.T.O.

	Report		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, etc. during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place	Date	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
	Date	From whom received				
9	4-2-17	Hav Cpl	Adm: G.S. W. Hugh	Norfolk	4/2/17	DO. 11/E 14/2/17. 620
10	9-3-17	3rd Aux	Trans 3rd Aux. Dartford	Dartford	9-3-17	
11	18-3-17	No. 2 Com. D	M/in from Dartford Hosp.	Weymouth	17-3-17	D/O 24 E 31-3-17 MP 735 11458
12	26/5/17.	H.O.D. Depot.	Proceeding Overseas FRANCE, Pte. to Emb: Draft Depot. via	Southampton	27/5/17.	DO. 40 E. 2/6/17. LR. 2187. 2633
13	2 MAI 1917	Co. 5 ADBD	Marched in from England	ETAPLES	28 MAI 1917	E57/22. B213.
14	23 JUIN 1917	Co. 5 ADBD	Marched out to Unit	Le Havre	18 JUIN 1917	E57/25. B213.
15	29 JUIN 1917	Co. 29 Bn. B213	Rejoined Unit ex. Nd.	FIELD	27 JUIN 1917	E6/26 DO 27/4065.
16	27. 7. 18	do	On leave to UK.	"	24/7/18	E6/82
17	28. 8. 18	"	Rejoined	"	19. 8. 18	E6/86
18	12 OCT 1918	"	Trans To 32nd Bn.	A.I.F. Field	12 OCT 1918	E6/93 DO 22/4837
19	12 OCT 1918	32 Bn B213	Pte Taken on Strength ex 29th Bn	do	12 OCT 1918	E9/95 DO 45/5743/1918
20	11/1/19	do	Pte Proceeded to England for return to Australia	do	10/1/19	E9/107 ~~DO 16/420/1919~~
21	18/1/19	A.I.B.D.	A/O to England - 1st Prol	Havre	17/1/19	99707/11. DO 21/1614/1919.
22	23-1-19.	No 1 L Depot	Pte. M/O from France	S/Verny.	18-1-19.	LX 2211
23	25-2-19	" "	Pte m/o to 2nd Eng. Bde. Codford	"	19-2-19	LB 3119
24	23-2-19	2nd Eng. Bde.	Pte m/in from No 1 C.D.	Codford	19-2-19	LX 2929

(2) Regtl. No.

(SERVICE AND CASUALTY FORM Part II).

Army Form B. 533—41. Part II.

Regiment or Corps 32nd Bn.

*Substantative Rank Pte. Surname Pye Regimental Number 909

*Acting Rank Christian Names Raymond

(* To be entered in pencil to facilitate alteration.)

(A) Report		(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
Date.	From where received	Authority of Part II. of Orders	Record of promotions, appointments, reductions, casualties, transfers, postings, &c. All acting as well as substantive promotions to be shown, for method of entry of which see A.C.I. 1856 of 1917. Corps and unit to which transferred and posted to be invariably named.	(D) Place of casualty	(E) Date of promotion, reduction, reversion, casualty, &c.	(F) Remarks, and initials and rank of an officer
			RETURN TO AUSTRALIA per Hildonian Castle For	Devonport	21.3.19.	

25

Nothing to be written in this margin.

A1854 W.6655—P1600 350,000 10/18 G.W.P.Co.(V.)

Statement of Service of No. 909 Name Pte Raymond

Units in which served.	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Period of service in each rank. From—	To—	Remarks.
Depot Seymour		21/7/15	11/8/15	
6. Bn 29 Batt.		12/8/15		
8 Bn/Brigade	Private		11.10.18	Fmo 3870 4/4/18 ALT
32nd Bn		12.10.18		
32 Bn	Pte Discharged 3 M.D.	T.O.E 29.6.19		M 41/120 of WP

I have examined the above details, and find them correct in every respect.

WAR GRATUITY SCHEDULE 3/9/19
Transferred to

W D

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

No. 909

Rank Pte Name Pye, R.

Unit 32nd ~~24th~~ Battalion

Casualty G.S.W. thigh, mild nature; admitted 4/2/17 to Norfolk War Hosp. WSML 38/8254 D.D. Lond 10/2/17

Returned to Australia per A. Kildonan Castle

Disembarked 3 M.D. 7.5.19 WP

DATE.	PURPORT.	REF. NO.
15 FEB 1917	N.O.K. Advised in Hospital 4.2.17 Wounded.	
14 APR 1919	N.O.K. Advised returning to Australia, Form 7 and Card	
29.6.19	Discharged 3 M.D.	
	"WILL" to Regt'l 52672 Page 82	
17-9-19	"WILL" to 3rd M.D. M 145/48P.	
	1914/1916 Star issued B.R.M. 43/12201 29/2/21	
	WAR HISTORY INDEX	
	1914/15 STAR ISSUED 2306H	
	BRITISH WAR MEDAL 3/26 ISSUED No. 25645	
	VICTORY MEDAL 3/26 ISSUED No. 25511	

LIST.

FIRST WORLD WAR NOMINAL ROLL DATABASE

Columns (L-R): Regimental number, Rank last held, Surname, First name/s, Final unit, Date of enlistment, Fate, Date of fate

1884	Cpl	PYE	Walter	3rd F...	17.8.14	R.T.A.	24.6.16
5461	Cpl	PYE	Walter	28th Battalion	21.2.16	R.T.A.	9.10.16
1268	Pte	PYEBOOLOOBAY	Marian	18th Battalion	11.12.14	N.I.A.	11.8.18
848	Cpl	PYATT	John	45rd Battalion	28.1.16	R.T.A.	20.8.19
5189	Pte	PYBURN	George Lee	11th Battalion	4.2.16	R.T.A.	18.9.17
4018	Pte	PYBURN	Phillip James	51st Battalion	18.7.17	R.T.A.	12.7.19
2487	Pte	PYBUS	Arthur Dorantry	54th Battalion	12.7.15	R.I.A.	19-20.7.16
150	Pte	PYBUS	Frederick Hagedorn	10th Battalion	12.1.16	R.I.A.	8.1.17
8438	Pte	PYBUS	John Hobden	12th L.H.	10.2.16	R.T.A.	8.4.19
	Major	PYBUS	Raymond Keith	1st Div.Art.		R.I.A.	16.4.17
3613	Pte	PYE	Alfred	48th Battalion	29.8.16	R.T.A.	18.8.19
4893	Pte	PYE	Alfred	50th Battalion	1.11.16	I.of.T.	16.2.17
8718	Pte	PYE	Alfred Rose	16th Battalion	27.8.16	R.I.A.	26.2.17
5894	Dvr	PYE	Alfred Roy	8th F.A.C.	9.[illegible].16	R.T.A.	13.4.19
3480	Dvr	PYE	Charles Henry	11th F.A.B.	26.7.15	R.T.A.	20.12.17
	Lt.Col.	PYE	Cecil Robert "BOB"	17th Battalion		R.I.A.	4.1.17
6420	Pte	PYE	Clarence Edgar	6th Battalion	18.6.16	R.T.A.	12.6.19
820	Pte	PYE	David	24th Battalion	20.9.15	R.T.A.	4.6.17
380	Pte	PYE	Edmund	2nd Pioneers	18.2.15	R.T.A.	9.7.19
3117	Pte	PYE	Edward	60th Battalion	12.7.15	R.T.A.	8.4.19
32838	Gnr	PYE	Eric Blundell	7th A.F.A.B.	19.9.16	R.T.A.	18.4.18
8700	Pte	PYE	Eric [illegible]	48th Battalion	7.4.16	R.T.A.	15.9.18
	Lieut	PYE	Eric John	3rd A.C.C.Park	9.3.15	R.T.A.	31.8.19
6128	Pte	PYE	Frederick	1st Battalion	23.5.16	R.T.A.	1.5.17
	Lieut	PYE	Frederick Charles	A.F.C.Pile	18.2.16	R.T.A.	18.2.19
7118	Pte	PYE	George Wilson	28th Battalion	6.9.17	R.T.A.	12.12.18
2230	Pte	PYE	Henry	52nd Battalion	28.8.15	R.I.A.	24.4.18
464	Pte	PYE	Harold Hume	2nd Battalion	17.8.14	R.I.A.	2.8.15
2007	Pte	PYE	James	5th Battalion	18.1.16	R.T.A.	11.4.16
2887	Pte	PYE	James	3rd Pioneers	8.8.16	R.T.A.	19.1[illegible].18
14350	Dvr	PYE	John	1st A & N Wireless Sig.Sqn.	29.1.16	R.T.A.	13.4.18
3437	Dvr	PYE	James Arthur	4th F.A.C.	8.8.15	R.T.A.	1.11.17
5943	Lieut	PYE	John Irwin	58th Battalion	3.4.15	R.T.A.	
*.N. &	Hon.Capt.	PYE	Joseph Henry	5th Fld Hy	3.12.14	R.T.A.	1.12.18
2878	Pte	PYE	John Thomas	A.S'Grs	4.9.16	R.I.A.	23.2.19
1277	Pte	PYE	Leslie Raymond	2nd Remount	27.9.15	R.T.A.	27.6.19
7321	Pte	PYE	Percy	A.A.S.C.	21.9.16		
1494	Sgt	PYE	Norman	2nd A.I.F.H.Q.S	19.8.16	R.T.A.	18.6.18
909	Pte	PYE	Raymond	28th Battalion	9.7.15	R.T.A.	21.3.19
6087	Spr	PYE	Russell David	1st F.C.E.	22.12.15	R.I.A.	27.7.16
	Lieut	PYE	Raymond Eric	17th Battalion		R.I.A.	17.8.16
1242	Cpl	PYE	Reginald Leslie	4th Battalion	3.10.14	R.I.A.	6-9.8.16

Private Raymond Pye's listing is 4th from the bottom.

These scans are as received from the Australian Army Central Army Records.