

Major Sydney James Walker

World War I Diary

Part 2

Major Sydney James Walker War Dairy II

18/11/16 The following is a summary of my doings since arriving in France.

1/7/16 Left Southampton on the night of June 30th and landed at Le Havre the following morn. It is a fairly large seaport and is not at all clean. We were to leave Havre that night so during the day I toured all over the town and the camps on the outskirts. Two of us hired a motor to go round. The train left 7.30pm. We slept in the carriage and got very cold. Arrived at Roven at 5.30am. Walked a few miles and found a coffee shop where we had breakfast. I then inquired where George was and after a great deal of trouble found his officer and I went with him to his flat. I walked in and Mr Brigden said to George he was bringing a friend to lunch. George looked at me as if it were like my cheek and as rations were short I would have to have dry bread. He looked directly at me and then turned away. I then called him by name and then it slowly dawned on him who I was. Well he served up a good meal and afterwards we had a good old talk and then walked round the town. I left Roven about 5.30p.m and arrived at Etaples the following morning at 5.00am. This place is a big concentration depot where there is no distraction at all. I was with the 4th Division and had to work about three miles every day to the training ground where we had to lecture to recruits until about 4.30pm. I was here about a week and during that time visited Paris-place which is right on the coast. We used to go in there and have strawberries and cream. I was particularly struck with the varied architectural. The effect was very pretty and striking. I also saw a ship that had been wrecked here on it's way from Australia. After leaving Etaples I joined the 4th divisional Artillery at Sailly. I left at 5.00am which meant rising at three as I had a few miles to walk to the station. It took three days from Etaples to Bach-St-Mur where Huns were. After arriving there I was posted to the 110th Howitzer Battery. I remained at the gun pit for a few days and was then sent down to take charge of the W. Lines. We only stayed in the position for about a week and then pulled out to go to the Somme. We concentrated at Bach-St Mur when we were suddenly ordered back to the line and a few days afterwards we had the battle of Fleurbaise. This battle was a ghostly affair. We bombarded for all we were worth. The heavy artillery were to blow up a machine gun stronghold (sugar loaf) but owing to the mist they were unable to do so. The Infantry attacked in force and took the first two lines of trenches, then the German Machine guns got on to them and were wicking them out. They were then ordered to retire and it was during this retirement that the loses were enormous. The infantry were almost annihilated. The Australians alone had five thousand killed. It was a dreadful sight after the battle (three days) to see the dead being buried. I have seen plenty of these sights but this one impressed me vastly. We remained in action about a month after this and then got ready to trek to Lumbres for a spell. This was my first long march for over twelve months and it caused me much worry. We very nearly lost one of the carts into the river. The first night we camped at Wallon Cappel. Next morning we had reveille at 5am and moved out at 7am arriving at Lumbres at 4pm. Our camp was in a fine level paddock with large stream flowing through it. We did our manoeuvres here for three weeks and very seldom did we work harder from 6.30am until 7 and 8 o'clock at night :- We had a very enjoyable time here. The people could not do nearly enough for us. The people where we messed were exceptionally to us. I visited St Omen from here and all the villages

with-in five miles from Lumbres. After this town we trekked to Reninghelst. We went in half divisions. Half the 10th, 11th, 12th and 24th. Brigades went first Col Robbet commanded the lot and I was in command of the 10th Brigade. After a very eventful day we arrived at Wallon Cappel and camped the first night, next day we went on to Reninghelst and remained in this sector for three months. Our position was just a little south of Afpnes. Whilst here I visited all the towns including Popperinge, Boesechepe, Abeede, Afpnes etc. Afpnes was absolutely in ruins. Every house was shattered I saw the ruins of the Cloth Hall, the Cathedral, Railway Station and all the other principal buildings. I also had some very interesting times at our observing Station near Vierstadt. Some of the night bombardments were magnificent, grand. It was intensely cold up there at times and I nearly froze during a few nights. The rain came through my dugout and was dripping all over my bed all night, fortunately my bed was waterproof but it did not keep out the cold. We were forbidden to light fires owing to our exposed position so that whilst we were up there we got very little warm food. It rained a great deal now and the mud was simply dreadful. The ground is very clayey and the water does not soak through. For weeks we worked in mud about two feet deep. It used to pull our boots off almost. Anyone who has not actually experienced this mud cannot form any idea of what it is like. There is no getting away from it at all.

4/11/16 I was transferred to the 4th D.A.C. to allow the Officers there to go to a Battery for experiences. The mud in their lines was worse if that could be possible. I was with them a week when we commenced our famous trek down to the Somme. We were going to rail down but at the last moment they decided to trek. The first day was bright and fine and we went as far as Wippen Hoek (about 6 miles) and stayed the first night. The next day we went through Godewoersvelde up the very steep, Mt. Des Calts, through Le Coude Paille (starting Pt) to Fletre where we stopped for lunch. One could not help noticing how densely populated the country was up to here. No house had a complete circle of 100 yards round it without striking another house. It is also very dirty in these thickly populated areas. The difference at first between Belgium and France seemed very marked to us. After leaving Fletre we went on to Strazeele and then to Vieuse Berquin where we camped in the open that night. During the night we went to the cinema and then to bed. It was a clear night and we woke up in the morning with all the beds covered in frost. It was rather cold during the morning. We set out at 10.15am. Went through Neuf Berquin to Melville which was the first big town we passed through from there we went to St Venant- another big town- to Busnes and Lillers which is a fine big town and then to our billets at Ecquedecques. We reached this village in the dark and had to park in an extremely small paddock with no place at all to tie the mules and horses. Everything was confusion for about two hours owing to the other sections getting misced up with us. Its was also very cold. We then (4th day) went on through Bellery, Ferfay & Aumerval then through Pernes-a fairly large town- to La thieuloye where we billeted for the night. At this village we were threatred exceptionally well by the people. They had a nice fire burning for us and we had a nice big meal. We woke the following morning and all the ground was frozen hard. The water was all turned into ice and it was bitterly cold. We left about 10am. And started our 5th day trip. We passed through Magnicourten Comte, Bailleul-aux-Cornailles, Averdoingt (starting point), Maizieres (a town),

Magnicourt-Sur-Cancho to our billets at Etree-Wamin. The people were not favourably disposed to us here and we had great difficulty to find billets for the men. We ourselves had no place to cook in so we borrowed a Tommies Cook house, had a good meal and then slept on some straw in a barn with practically only a roof to it. The weather had been very fine up till now, but during the night it got extremely cold and snowed. In the morning when we woke our beds were covered with snow and the country and village were white. We felt the cold very, very much now. We were almost frozen and could not get warm. Our feet were like ice blocks. We set out at 10.30am for our 6th day trip with the snow falling. During this day we had snow, hail, sleet and in the afternoon it rained. This was indeed an experience for us but nevertheless everyone was cheerful and making the best of things. We passed through Beaudricourt, Lucheuse on to our billets at Grouches. The Batteries were billeted here with us. We managed to secure a large room from an old lady of about 100 years old. This woman was a most weird person. She used to wonder round the house and appear from nowhere. She actually got on bed was waterproof but it did not keep out the cold. We were forbidden to light fires owing to our exposed position so that whilst we were up there we got very little warm food. It rained a great deal now and the mud was simply dreadful. The ground is very clayey and the water does not soak through. For weeks we worked in mud about two feet deep. It used to pull our boots off almost. Anyone who has not actually experienced this mud can-not form any idea of what it is like. There is no getting away from it at all.

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- 3/12/16 It has been a little warmer to-day but the ground is still frozen. Bombardment not so intense. Walked to H.Qrs with Lt. Jackson. Had a headache all day. I think it was due to the Rolly Polley last night Trickett had a night warmer. Received three guns to hold in case of accidents.
- 5/12/16 The sun was shining for a few hours yesterday and melted the frozen mud I think it would have been better if it had not. Tried to draw some money for the men. Practised revolver shooting. Lt. Gordon called to see me last night. Went for a ride into Meaulte to-day. Sleet was falling all the way home. Firing very intense last night. It was so intense that a number of the men could not sleep. A German plane brought down yesterday. There were aerial duets all day. A horse of ours was strangled last night. We have been salving ammunition for some days now. It is surprising the enormous amount of ammunition there is lying about. In the "big push" they just had to dump it anywhere and consequently we collected millions of rounds of S.A.A. and thousands of rounds of Gun Ammunition. At one place about a mile from here they were very anxious to push the light railway along and as there were no sleepers handy they just emptied the heavy shell off the motor lorries and ballasted the rails on them. We are now digging those shells out. Any lay person cannot credit the amm. there is here. The dumps extend for miles and there is enough here, if properly used, to kill every Hun. I am sure that no one here has any idea what amm. there is until we salve it all and then count it.- We are losing a big percentage of animals owing to the weather, shell holes and mud. The mules are a constant source of amusement to us. Mule humour is certainly very funny. Received a photo from George to-day. We have now managed to make a bit of a mess shed. It keeps out the rain, lets in the icy cold wind and does not allow the smoke to escape still we are very lucky. Wet, cold and miserable day. Still salving ammunition. Drew pay for the men. Visited #293 Sections and listened to the Gramophone. Enemy dropped some shells nears us (Pommieri Redoubt). Received letters from Nora, B.M. and I.F. Firing not so intense to-day but very heavy last night. Revolver shooters. Mud very bad.
- 7/12/16 On duty at the dump to-day where we are taking all the salved S.A.A. One million rounds unloaded. There are any amount of the very best Motor-Cars left stuck in the mud. If they get bogged they are turned over out of the way

of the traffic because the traffic must not be held up for anything. We are about 500 yards from a cross roads and the traffic regulations are so strict that we have to go round 8 miles by the loop road so that there will be no possible congestion. It rained a little to-day. Received a letter from Capt. Sampson.

8/12/16 On duty at Quarry Dump salved one million six hundred thousand rounds of S.A.A. Received a letter from D. Ford. I am not feeling the cold to-night so will write a description of the "Stunt on the Somme" "On the Somme" What memories are awakened by this phase. To those who have only read the picturesque, though graphie account of war correspondents such as Beach Thomas, it conveys just what he has seen and heard, but to those of us who have felt, well it throws other shadows on the wall. Coming down from the Ypres salient after spending some (8) months under wet, muddy exacting conditions, we found the long trek -14 days-, even though we experienced rain, sleet, snow, and wintry winds on the way, very interesting, and were in a measure prepared beforehand for what the Somme held in store, by those who had already been there, but I shall never forget my own impressions as I traversed the Somme valley that had been literally torn back from the German tentacles by heroic scarified of the allied sons of France and Britain.

Follow me as I ride from Ville-sur- Ancre where valley the first evidence of our reconquest present themselves. Between it and the town of Meaulte on the left of the road lies the village of Dernacourt, Sadly battered about by shell fire but still retaining something of its original outline. Along the road goes continuos streams of war traffic; batteries of Artillery of all calibres from the 13 pds. Anti- aircraft gun to the huge 10 and 12 inch monster on caterpillar wheels; miles upon miles of transport of all kinds; mounted troops, Infantry, pioneers and so forth and all the impediments of war are here; overhead are numerous aeroplanes of the allies, the hum of whose engines remind me of the humming top of boyhood dayst night. It was so intense that a number of the men could not sleep. A German plane brought down yesterday. There were aerial duets all day. A horse of ours was strangled last night. We have been salving ammuniton for some days now. It is surprising the enormous amount of ammuniton there is lying about. In the "big push" they just had to dump it anywhere and consequently we collected millions of rounds of S.A.A. and thousands of rounds of Gun Ammunition. At one place about a mile from here they were very anxious to push the light railway along and as there were no sleepers handy they just emptied the heavy shell off the motor lorries and ballasted the rails on them. We are now digging those shells out. Any lay person cannot credit the amm. there is here. The dumps extend for miles and there is enough here, if properly used, to kill every Hun. I am sure that no one here has any idea what amm. there is until we salve it all and then count it.- We are losing a big percentage of animals owing to the weather, shell holes and mud. The mules are a constant source of amusement to us. Mule humour is certainly very funny. Received a photo from George to-day. We have now managed to make a bit of a mess shed. It keeps out the rain, lets in the icy cold wind and does not allow the smoke to escape still we are very lucky. Wet, cold and miserable day. Still salving ammuniton. Drew pay for the men. Visited #293 Sections and listened to the Gramophone. Enemy dropped some shells nears us (Pommierre Redoubt). Received letters from Nora, B.M. and I.F. Firing not so intense to-day but very heavy last night. Revolver shooters. Mud very bad.

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12/12/16 To-day has been very miserable and I don't like having to write. We were awakened this morning, as usual, by the bugle, and then got up. My blankets were damp and where I had been breathing on them during the night was all

frozen. It was very cold. When I got outside the ground was all white and snow falling very heavily. During the morning the snow changed to sleet and later on into rain which melted the snow and changed the ground into thick pea-soap while the tent were so pretty white. There were regular lakes and rivers all over the place. The shed in which I keep my horses was surrounded by deep and running moat. The Captured trenches are being rapidly filled with water. The night bequeath were drenched to the skin and looked exceedingly miserable. Everything was wet, mud ,slush and snow. I feel sorry for the men because they are having a most bitter and trying time but they are sticking to it like heroes. Some of them don't know what it is like to be dry, warm and comfortable. It would be impossible to make the conditions for animals any worse. Fortunately we all get enough to eat. We have got the majority of the men top boots, socks, and water proof capes. The officers are not one bit better off than the men and some of the men have much better dugouts. The enemy shells were falling boths sides of us during the night. Very quiet during the day. We were salving gun ammunition. The roads are in a deplorable state. Great inconveniences feeding the animals owing to shortage of nosebags. We have about 50 to feed 328 animals. The horse line are about 300 yards from the camp and it takes us about twenty minutes to reach them as we have to make a devious route to avoid the worst of the mud. We would bog if we walked straight across. Conditions will be much better when it freezes.

- 13/12/16 Much warmer on duty at Quarry Dump. 6 " How firing right over us . Met Father Murphy and called to see him in the afternoon. Received a letter from George. Firing easy today but intense last night. To-days news was not very cheering. Judging by events I think we will have an offensive at Ysres this month. Obtained 300 nosebags from Ordnance and were thereby enabled to give the animals a good feed.
- 14/12/16 Salving ammunition. Rained this afternoon . Fritz got on to us with his 5.9s this evening. He blew a few huts to pieces and got the horse line next to ours. To hear the poor horses screaming with pain would move the hardest man. Changed horses to-day very little firing on the Right judging by sound.
- 15/12/16 Detailed to draw pay at Albert (Ell Central). Had a very interesting ride over though it rained. Saw the famous church that was blown down, also the image of the Blessed Virgin that was knocked off its balance on the top of the tower but it did not fall. Visited Simper (1/2 section) and listened to the phonogram. Still salving ammunition. We go to a big Div Camp as soon as we finished which I think will be about 23rd inst. Received a letter from Bern and Capt.Simpson. Wrote to Bern.
- 16/12/16 Fine in the morning. Snowed all the afternoon and was bitterly cold. Good news from the French. They have taken the offensive again. Much talk about peace. We are all dead against it in our little camp. It is unthinkable after all the sacrifices we have made and I will be sorry I enlisted if we don't fight on until we are the absolute victors. Trickett leaves to-morrow to layout our winter camp for the animals. Fritz shelled our camp but fortunately did not get any of us. Received letter from D.M., Jack, Rick and Mal. Salved ammunition and aid the men.
- 17/12/16 Assumed temporary command of "B" Echelon. Received a parcel from M.B. also letters from Edinburgh and Cocks. Not so cold to-day but very very foggy. Salved ammun. Reinfts arrived. Firing on both sides very intense. It is rather weird being shelled in the fog.

Major Sydney James Walker War Dairy II

- 18/12/16 Cloudy in the morning. Freezing this afternoon. Tried three men at 9.30 am. Attended a conference at D.A.C. H.Qrs. re: the move to take place in a few days time "B" Echelon is to remain here for sometime yet. Still salving ammun. Received secret instruction from 1st D.H.Qrs Hall spoke to the Col. about our promotions. Visited Simper. C. Williams my Batman went on leave to England N.J. William's taken his place. Wrote to Norman. Firing last night was terrific more goods news from the French.
- 19/12/16 A very sharp frost last night made the ground hard and places which yesterday were dangerous to walk in, presented no difficulties. Heavy snow fell for about an hour. It was like very fine dry salt and soon completely covered everything. It has been freezing all day. We endeavoured to make ourselves fairly comfortable by building a fire place out of an oil-drum in the shed we call our mess which also serves as a bedroom for the batman. The fire answers A.I. and makes a wonderful difference Men and Mules had a spell to-day. Firing from both sides very intense. Lt McPhelan went on leave. The Colonel tried a man the other day and after hearing the charge asked the man if he were guilty "Ah Oui" answered the man "28 days" Compris?" said the Colonel. Received a damaged How from 110th Bty. Headache all day. Replied to secret instructions French news good.
- 20/12/16 Sun shining. Very pretty to see the sun and the ground all frozen hard and covered with snow. The animals get out by pulling the wagons over the frozen ground. Received a parcel from Mrs Rose. Fritz was very active and did a lot of damage at the dump. He blew the railway line up, also a dressing station and killed a number of men. One man had his head and brains scattered all over the place. Fritz dropped a 9.2" shell right under the wheel of a one of our loaded wagons. It was a miraculous escape for the men and animals shells also fell all around our camp. 30 balloons and 62 aeroplanes were flying the morning. Intense Artillery duels. 24th F.A.B got properly peppered. A battle evidently raging on our right - The French sat on two Boards of Inquiry this afternoon. B.S.M. returned under escort. Salved ammun. Wrote to Mrs Rose. Another 18 pdr brought in to us. Hands swelling with the cold and I suspect a Chielblain. Sick Parade very small to-day. Saw a G.E. Wagon being pulled through the mud by eighteen (18) mules. Ground that was dangerous to walk over yesterday was as firm as rock. The roads are so slippery, owing to being frozen and in parts covered with ice, that the animals cannot stand up. LT. Hogg wounded in the hand.
- 21/12/16 Not quite so cold but raining and blowing. The ground is thawing and getting muddy again. Sent 3 N.C.D~ to an artillery school 11th F.A.B marching in. # 1 section came up here by mistake. Shelling intense by both sides. Very heavy shells coming from Fritz. Sent 5 wagons to 24th F.A.B. also two guns to I.O.M. Salving Ammun. Three cases failed. Room. Wrote to M.B. Revolver practice. Six shots and six bulls. Was given two oranges to-day. Very dark at 7am and 4pm days very short. Enemy shelling dump again. Large number of our planes up.
- 23/12/16 To ill to write yesterday Received letters from George, Edinburgh, & Mac Dear and.
- 22/12/16 It rained in torrents last night and also blew very heavily. I thought the tent was coming down every second. Firing very heavy. During the day the rain fell in torrent and about 11.30a.m. a terrific wind blew. The roof of the

stables was blow completely off, tents came down and the covering over the cookhouse was destroyed. It was most annoying. Watched an artillery duel in the afternoon. LT. Jackson visited us. His horse strayed away and his saddle and bridle were stolen. Mud is just as bad as ever owing to the recent rains. Wrote to George and Edinburgh Fritz shelling the dump again. A large number of fresh troops have been marching in during last two days.

- 24/12/16 Fairly fine and not very cold. Received orders to move on to BUIRE to-morrow. Called down and saw the colonel. Collected all the material ready for the move. Sent a wagon into Albert to draw winter apparatus for 11th F.A.B. Practised revolver shooting. Fritz had another go at Cosy Corner but he did not hit it although he went very close. A horse got into our mess shed last night and eat all the stores etc. He did make a mess indeed.
- 25/12/16 "Christmas Day" Reveille at 5pm. After a great deal of trouble we got the first seven wagons away to Buire. It rained and blew something awful and was not light until 6.50am The second lot of wagons got away at 11.30am. I remain behind and had dinner with Mr Rundle. We had tinned turkey, potatoes and plum pudding. Left for Buire at 12.30pm and arrived there at 3.45pm. The B.S.M. and Ord. Bom. came with me. It was blowing hard all the way. The camp here is very well laid out. The men are all in tents and the animals on chalk standing. No 1., part of 2 and 4 are here. Had tea with Trickett and went to bed early. Received a letter from L.E and parcel from Oranbrook. The men working on the roads had a holiday and as I rode here I noticed various signs of Christmas celebrations. The tent I am in is in fair condition but the floor is very, very muddy. B.S.M. Mc Kenzie resumes duty.
- 26/12/16 "Boxing Day" Reveille at 6.30am and fell in at 7pm. Stables, breakfast. Sent 14 G.S. wagons back to Mc Rumble, 6 for chalk and loaned 8 to the other sections. It was fine this morning so I had a trench dug round my tent. Carried on laying out the camp Hd. Qrs arrived in the afternoon. Rained later on and the rain came through the tent wetting my bed and belongings. Made the floor very,very muddy. It is still raining hard and I expect my bed to float before morning. Had to shoot a horse to-day.
- 27/12/16 Fine to-day. Sent 4 more G.S. Wagons back to Mc Rundle. Carried on improvements to the camp. Stimper arrived this afternoon. Received letter from B.M. Three reinforcements arrived also a wagon with iron, etc. form Mountauban. Put a floor in my tent after scraping out the mud.
- 28/12/16 Very cold ground all frozen hard and white with thick, heavy frost. Carried on the good work of improving the camp. 4 wagons arrived from Mc Rundle also 1 from 11th F.A.B. The colonel arrived. Mr Dickinson reported to this section for duty. Went to the "Shops" with Sutton to-night Camp routine started. It is now raining hard.
- 30/12/16 Nothing of importance's yesterday. Went to the Pictures in the evening and saw Gen. Birdwood there. The colonel had us for an interview re: going to the Pictures without asking leave. Had two cases for Orderly Room. Relieved Simper for a few hours. Obtained a hut from the I.D.M. Received a letter from D.M Had a headache yesterday and to-day. There is just as much mud here as at Montauban.
- 31/12/16 Orderly Officer to-day. Rain threatening all day and poured to-night. Drew chalk for standings. 20 cases for orderly room to-day. Received 14 reinforcements. Wrote to Capt Sampson. Building a stable for my horse. shelling Albert last night.

Major Sydney James Walker War Dairy II

- 1/1/17 New Years Day. Drew pay and paid the men. Went to a show in the evening. It was a dreadful affair. Nothing of importance occurred during the day.
- 2/1/17 Sent Rundle to pay the men at the Quarry Dump. Put the pony in a stable. Went for a ride to the Quarry. Revolver shooting. Received letters from Jack, E.L. and Rick also Gloves from England. Wrote to E.L. It rained this evening. Had a bath yesterday. The first for about six weeks so I began the New Year well. Heavy bombardment at 12 o'clock 31/12/16.
- 3/1/17 Carried out camp work. I have now nearly completed the horse standing for 330 animals. 80 loads of chalk were carted to-day. Finished paying the men. The central mess is completed and we were able to stay in there out of the cold and listen to the gramophone. Nothing worthily of note occurred to-day. A very miserable and cold day. Received a letter from George and replied to it.
- 5/1/17 A bright fine day. Rode into Albert yesterday and got nice and wet. Called at the Aust. Comforts store but got nothing. Went for a ride into Edge Hill. The pony cleared away when I got off. Went hunting with Simper and tried to shoot birds with our revolvers. Went to the variety show in the evening.
- 6/1/17 Rained very hard all night and this morning intense artillery fire last night especially Heavy Guns. Returned ACQ. Rolls. Went for a walk in the swamps to try and shoot birds whilst going to the show last night I had the misfortune to fall into the creek and got wet through. It was awful cold. Cloudy most of the day and very cold.
- 7/1/17 Ground all Frozen this morning. Gave the men a holiday and they played football. Went for a walk with the Colonel. Orderly Officer to-day. Practised revolver shooting. Received a letter from Bern. When we first went to Montauban it was extremely cold and for about a fortnight. I was never warm, so Rundle and I decided to build a dugout which we did. It was no sooner finished than it fell in so Trickett made a piece of poetry on the event.

'Our Dugout'

'Twas on the Somme in the great big war
Two Officers staunch and true
Were cold of feet and sleepless
For their tent let in the dew.

(2)

Dew did I say? I meant the rain,
The sleet, the snow and ice,
Which for these two Australians
You'll admit was not too nice.

(3)

So between them they'd decided
That a dugout they would try
Believing it would keep them warm

And also keep them dry.

(4)

Having chosen where they'd dig it
They got busy straight away
With spade and pick and shovel
To shift away the clay.

(5)

There were Sid and Beau and William's too
That on the job did toil
And soon a hole quite big enough
Appeared in that wet-soil.

(6)

The William's Senior went afield
Some roofing to discover
Which in a Hun trench close at hand
Was serving as a cover.

(7)

Of this some dozen sheets he got
And proudly he came back
I've got of iron quite enough
To cover this damp shack.

(8)

But first they found they'd dug the hole
A foot or so to long
For the timber that would hold the roof
A grievous silly wrong.

(9)

Now Big William's was an artist
At every kind of job
He didn't worry very much
But blabbed like a gazob.

(10)

I'll fix it Mr Walker I'll see it's right you know
And so they left it to him
Mid the rain and sleet and snow.

(11)

Ah when the roof at last was fixed
How proudly Syd and Beau
Looked at its inwards comforts
And each said I told you so.

(12)

That night at mess they chuckled
And said how warm they'd be
When snugly in their dugouts

They could drink their steaming tea.

(13)

Big William's told his comrades

What a splendid job he'd done

And when finished claimed that it would be
the best thing on the Somme.

(14)

At getting what he wants I vow

He beats the men in scriptures

And so he told the Officers

He'd even get them pictures.

(15)

For in a dugout such as he built

The walls were very bare

And a picture of the Kaiser

Or the crown Prince would be there.

(16)

And so all went to sleep and dreamed

Of comforts rich and rare

For in the morn both Syd and Beau

Said Australia will be there.

(17)

Now I don't want to rub it in

But what a funny joke

That Dugout was when in the morn

The blessed daylight broke.

(18)

The roof had fallen on the floor

The sides had followed suite

And in their rage the officers

Said, they'd give William's the boot.

11/1/17 I have had Influenza for the last few days and been very miserable. All are feeling the cold very much. Gordon is camped at Buire Hall arrived with 3 K last night. Snowing to-day and very cold. Rudle Transferred to 3 K. Received a cable from home two days ago.

12/1/17 Sleet and hail falling nearly all day very cold and miserable. Gordon called this afternoon. Paid the men last night. Received some reinforcements. Lost some animals. This constant rain has made the ground exceedingly boggy and the places where grass was growing three weeks ago, is now thick mud about two feet deep. The animals are looking very miserable and never seem to be warm. I feel very sorry for the men because they have a miserable time. Feet never dry, always in mud and the tents are not even a little comfortable. We had to pitch our tents in the mud and it has never dried but has been made worse. To try and keep the men from having to be actually in the mud, I got them sheets of galvanised iron. It is very cheerless in the tents because they are cold and many of them leak. The mud is in and all around them. When clothes get wet there is no chance at all of drying them. Feet are beginning to swell to such an extent that it is with great difficulty that boots are put on at all. My word this winter is testing everybody. In the summer we all lived in billets but

for nearly three months of winter we have had to live in tents and the remarkable part about it is that so few go sick. I am sure that none but seasoned troops could stick this out very long. It is mostly our reinforcements that crack up first. I went for a ride on the pony yesterday along the bank of the Amere. It was very nice although bleak and cold.

15/1/17 I was laid up a very severe headache two day ago. Went for a ride to Port Nayelle with Simper. It was very cold as the thermometer only registered 32 F. We rode along the main Amiens road. Some of these French roads are truly remarkable for straightness. They run for many miles without a single curve. It was very interesting to see the barb wire entanglements in the fields. I bought some gum boots at P.N. and had a very fine lunch there. The sections changed animals to-day and it was a circus without doubt. Took over duties of mess Secretary.

18/1/17 Snow fell very heavily on night of 16th and all day 17/1/17. It was a fall of about four inches and all the surrounding country and villages were white. The roads were frozen and the animals could not remain on their feet. Gave the men a holiday and they organised a hare hunt. They spread out for about two miles and then closed in. 8 hares were in the circle but after two hours keen driving only one was caught. It was great sport whilst it lasted. Everything looks very pretty with the snow only it is so cold. I feel sorry for the animals out in this weather all night and a lot of them have not any rugs even.

5/2/17 I am at present in London on leave. Before leaving I was intensely cold and miserable as the thermometer only registered 16 (= 16 of frost) and had a severe cold. This cold has given me much trouble. The artillery has been re-organised - 25/1/17 - and I am posted to the 37th Battery. Left Camp at 2 am 25/1/17 and arrived at Southampton 8 am 27/1/17. Stayed in London Sat. and Sunday and saw "The Bing Boys" Went to tea to Miss Bowens on Sunday. Monday morning left for Stranraer and arrived there at 9.30 pm. Uncle and Aunt and Cousins all very nice and gave me a good time. Sarsfield was also there. We visited Port Patrick and saw the well where the fished are tame and can be fed with the hand and stroked. Weather was very good but I was ill all the time. I visited the house where my mother stayed 40 years ago. Returned to London on Friday morning. A very thick fog came on. Went to tea to Miss Bowen's and to "Zig Zag" in the evening. On Saturday I visited the Tower and went to Gravesend in the afternoon. I stayed the night there Sunday had Dinner at 12 Egerton Terrace and tea with Mrs Edwardes. Monday did some shopping and am now packing up to return to France to-morrow. It has been snowing a great deal in London and skating in Hyde Park and all the ponds is in full swing.

26/3/17 Left England for France on 6th 2/17 the day I left I caught the train to Wareham and Saw Bern. We only had about 1 hour so never had much time to talk about old times. The boat was simply packed and there was no room at all to sleep. Had to sit up all night and try to sleep which was not easy owing to the roll of the ship. Landed at Le Havre alright on 7/2/17. It was fearfully cold and about 300 officers were stranded there owing to no trains being available. We had to stay at an hotel and spent a very miserable three days. Caught a train on 9/2/17 and after a very long long and cold trip arrived at the D.A.C. Stayed there that night and reported back to my Battery. The following morning there was a lot of work to do and I am still going. The Section Commanders are LTs Tait Rowlands and Felstead. Felstead was transferred to

- T. Mortors and we now have Lt. Fergusson. We left Montauban on 1/3/17 and came through Albert to Bavlincourt passing Franvillen and Behencourt on the way. Remained here about 12 days and were then ordered back on the 12th with the Firing Battery only. We were to assist the 2nd Division in an operation against the Germans. When we got up there no one had made any preparations for us. We arrived there in the dark had to work all night getting guns up and the following night the Germans evacuated so we were not wanted. We were in the mud and it was bitterly cold and raining, snowing etc. all the time. On the 15th we pulled out again and came back here to our old Wagons Lines at BAVLINCOURT. Since being here we have been inspected by the Corp Commander (Gen. Birdwood) the Div. Commander (Gen! Holmes) and Gen Rosenthal. I have also been to Amiens and had a good look at the town besides having my photo taken there.
- 28/3/17 Took the Battery out for manoeuvre past BEHENCOURT. Capt Garling and Fergusson went for a joy ride to Bapaume. The weather to-day was delightful. LT.Rowland and LT. O'Reilly were put under arrest yesterday by the General.
- 30/3/17 Inspected by the general to-day. Mr Rowland went to hospital. Went for a ride to Amiens with Capt. Garling, Stuck a hail storm on the way in. The hail was that heavy that the horses refused to go against it. Dined at the Hotel De Rhine and got back home at 6.45pm. Had a lot of fun shopping.
- 8/4/17 We are now in action beyond BAPAUME left Bavlincourt 2/4/17 and after a very cold journey camped at 4th D.A.C. MAMETZ. We arrived there at 4pm, loaded up with ammunition and then the snow came extremely heavy we were stuck in the mud over the horses knees and the horses could not pull against the blinding snow. After freezing about ten times we eventually got parked and stabled. It was my most trying experience since joining the army. That night it blew a hurricane and no one could sleep. Next day we pulled out early. It was bitterly cold. This days journey was interesting. We passed through the remains of Poziers and Le Sars and also saw the famous Flour Mills or Sugar Factory where the "Tank" did so much damage. This was in the country held by the Germans until a few weeks ago. One would not credit the awful state of the ground after our continuous bombardments. Every inch of ground was pitted with shell holes and how the Germans held it so long is a Mystery to me. The Germans in their retirements cut down all trees, mined and blew up all cross roads and absolutely destroyed every house. We passed by 9 of our tanks which had been disabled also several of our aeroplanes. Eventually we reached Bapaume. At one time it was a fine big city but now it is a heap of ruins. The Germans blew out the front of every single house and mined a large number including the Town Hall. The explosion in the Town Hall killed quite a number of people including Aust. Comforts Fund. representatives. The fine, large and deep dugouts round Bapaume were furnished from the houses in the town. They had stoves and heaters and nice spring beds (I am sleeping on one now) One has to be very careful of everything. Bombs are placed everywhere and wires attached so that the least strain sets them going. The yew trees have also been purposely poisoned to destroy our horses and anything that we are likely to touch is infected. Our battery is in action just outside the village of ECOUST-ST-MEIN we are only 250 yards from our outposts and do not feel at all safe. Last night we had a very exciting time getting the guns in. By some home Fritz. Started to shell just when the wagons were in the village and then things got lively. Lieut. Rundle was very badly hit and his horse also. Two

men were wounded, two mules killed and one horse blown to pieces. The Great offensive is supposed to commence to-morrow at dawn. A few night ago I witnessed a great piece of work by a Hun. It was just at dusk and an enemy aeroplane suddenly loomed into view and was flying straight for one of our captive balloons. The balloon was only 100 yards from us. He fired at it and missed so he flew straight on until he came to the second balloon which he set on fire. Then he turned straight round and descended to about 1000 ft and few at the near balloon. When the observers saw him they jumped out. He flew straight at it, fired six rounds and set it on fire. He was almost on top of us now and we were sure he would machine gun our lines but he was evidently hit and after a few spectacular moves to right himself he flew away. LT Rundle was hit last night and is not expected to live.

10/4/17 It was snowing yesterday and again today Drew pay. Yesterday the offensive commenced. There was a terrific bombardment - during the morning and the din was awful. We were very successful. All our Army Corps reached their objective and up to midday 9/4/17 the 5th Army had captured over 2000 prisoners. The Germans are not putting up a fight at all. The Canadians have done well so also have the Australian. We are all loaded up really to advance in 30 minutes. Everyone is more or less excited over the offensive. Had a game of bridge with the two U.D's (Sedenmeyer and Ridley [since killed]) it is still very cold.

7/5/17 The days of severe cold are now passed and I hope will not come any more whilst we are here. It is almost too warm now after such severe weather. Both men and horse a feeling the change wonderfully. We have taken post in the "Great Offensive." The bombardments have been something terrific and by far the worst I have ever experienced. The ground was vibrating the whole time it was on. We have been attacking BULLECOURT and did not take it at first. The fighting has been extremely fierce and I think this village has been made into a very strong fortress. The news came through to-day that we have taken half of it and that means we will have the remains before night.

Our casualties have been very heavy in this "scrap" and the approach to the Battery position is known as the "Valley of the shadow of death" and the name is very appropriate.

Bern Mc Tague is camped just close handy and has been over to see twice.

23/6/17 Left Bapaume on 14/5/17 marched to Albert where we stayed two days then entrained at Edge Hill about five miles away. We were in the train for 15 hours and got out a Bailleul. Then we marched to Neuf Berquin about one mile from Estaires. Remained three days. Marched to Bailleul then into action at Wulverghem. I was in charge of the Bridge Wagon Lines at Dranoutre. The concentration of Artillery was enormous and we had to have two U Lines. The Hun used to shell us every evening. After being there about a week I had to go and take command of the 38th Battery during the Messines battle as Major De Low was going on leave. We were not allowed to select of Battery positions as there was such a tremendous number of Batteries coming in, so we had to take what was given us. Each battery had 1,300 rounds per gun (7,800) dumped at the guns. The enemy shelled every evening and these dumps were being continually blown up. Five days before the battle we commenced to bombard. It was a wonderful sight and we could watch it all from the Battery position. Messines was blown completely away by the heavy Artillery and so were the enemy trenches. We did not fire much until the day of the attack. While we

were waiting the N. Zealand D.A.C. dumped 18,000 rounds about 25 yards from my guns. Well on the day of the attack, the Hun concentrated on my Battery and got this big dump. The fire lasted two hours and the explosions and heat was terrific. I had to get the gunners away and whilst they were away the gun - pits caught fire. Two other Officers (Parkes and Jolly) myself and my servant had to go out and try to extinguish them. The Hun was shelling us all the time and this dump was just about going properly. My servant then did the very brave deed for which he was recommended. He carried water from about 15 yards of the blazing dump to the guns. There were bits of iron flying everywhere at this time and the fumes and smoke were choking us all, Still this lad carried water to us until we put the fires out and just as we finished an 8 inch shell hit the bottom of the pit and stunned us all. The two other officers were knocked down but unhurt my batman was mounded in two places and I got two bit of shell in the face - one piece remained in a week hit on the throat and shoulder. Next day we had to dash forward with the guns and take up a position. Some days afterwards we visited the front line. Messines was blown away, all the enemy trenches completely obliterated and all his strong points made untenable. His dugouts were most elaborate being built of concrete 6 to 12 feet thick carpets on floor, feather beds, electric light, wall papered, tiled in heaters, in fact everything. I was able to get a very valuable signalling lamp in one of the dugouts. The battle commenced in its 7th inst. On the 4th my very greatest friend Bern Mc Tague was killed in action with this Battery. This was the greatest blow of the whole war to me as he was the truest and best man I have ever known or will ever meet.

My promotion to Captain came out on the 5th June 1917 and was dated back to 21/1/17.

30/6/17 I arrived home from Paris on the 29th. The trip to Paris was a very splendid one and will not be forgotten during my life I left camp early in the morning, caught the train at Steenwercke, passed through Hazebrouck, Calais, Boulogne, Amiens and Abbeville. Going down in the train I met a wealthy flax merchant named Ireland who invited me to stay with him at Boulogne for one day of my leave which I did and went all along the coast to the beautiful homes. a splendid view is obtained from the cliffs and England can be seen in the distance. I saw all the old fortification etc. I eventually arrived at Paris and stayed at the Hotel Edward VII. It was very dear but most comfortable first day. I book a guide from Cooks and toured the city. We saw the famous Notre Dame, Palace of the Louve, Luscembery, Latin Quarter, Palace of Justice, Mapolesie Tomb, Eiffel Tower, Champs Elysees, Rue de Boulogne, the Boulevards, Church of St Modalaine in fact I saw everything of any importance. The theatres were fine. To also was Pathe Frares Cinema. I saw the place where the Guillotine used to be erected. Took the ferry boat along the Seine. The sights are truly remarkable and I have never seen any city so clean, Beautiful and artistic. It is also the most wicked and sinful of all places. I only stayed three days in Paris and then went to Boulougne for a day. I knew a very decent Merchant there named Ireland. He took me around the town and for trip along the coast. I enjoyed myself immensely. After that I rejoined my Unit. We went into action the next night and I was left in charge of the Brigade U lines which I had to shift to Steenwercke. Remained at the u lines and then relieved the Battery Commander at the gun pits. We are in action just near Ploegsteert Village and Wood. I have been through the wood which is

exceedingly large when the Germans shells burst in there the noise is something terrific owing to the echoes.

9th July. The New Zealanders are relieving us and we are preparing to go into new positions near the Ypres - Comines Canal. It is very quiet at this position and time hangs very heavily. All day long there is hardly one shot fired but in the evening things liven up. The Hun shells all cross roads and villages and his aeroplanes bomb all camps. He knocked Bailleul about a few nights ago and battered some houses. There were very few casualties considering the number of planes over and bombs dropped. Fergusson goes on leave.

17/7/17 We are in our New Position near Triangular Wood near the Ypres - Comines Canal. This Position it the worst we have ever been in, Worse even than at Bullecourt. We are right in the open with no cover at all and Fritz shelling all day. The 39th Battery have had about 15 casualties in a few days, the 39th about 7 and us about 3. The men have no sleep at night owing to gas shells (Lethal Gas). The concentration of Artillery is terrific. Never yet has it been so thick or so much ammunition about. The Messines battle was big enough but I think it will be Entirely forgotten after this one. There is an army of pursuit waiting and if we can only obtain what we are after I think it will nearly end the war. The aerial Activity is abnormal. Sometimes there are as many as 35 of our aeroplanes over us at the one time, and notwithstanding all these Fritz had a go at our balloons and set one on fire. We get one of the planes by forcing him to land, the other one was chased home and I do not know weather he got away another Fritz had his wings blown off and crashed to the earth. The balloon that he set on fire is just behind our camp so we saw the whole show and I must call him a brave man to attempt such a thing after the way we were guarding our balloons, we have thousands of these observation balloons up. A few nights ago Hun plane flew over the camp and dropped bombs. One bomb alone killed 33 horse and wounded about 21 all in one Battery. The whole it made it extremely smell. The pieces seemed to fly along the ground for nearly all the horses had their legs broken. It was a most pitiable sight needless to say we are not the happiest of people during these visits. Sr Vandertak courtmarchalled, also Dr Ruane and Dr Murphy. Raining all day and very miserable
VANDERTAK - got five years p.s.

2/8/17 Today we have reached about the limit of bad conditions. It has been drizzling for the last four days. Our dugout is about six feet deep and two feet of water is in it. Everything including ourselves has gone blue mouldy. I relieved Major Gaeling on the 23rd July and it has bee a severe strain all the time. We are in action just below the crest of a hill. Every twig and bush and tree has Battery behind it. The guns are almost wheel to wheel and these are lines and lines of them 6 inch guns and howitzers and 8 inch howitzers are in front of us and all round us. Fritz knows we are here and consequently. Shells us day and night he does not shell one particular Battery but throws his shells anywhere and never fails to get a Battery. If he only knew how successful he was we would probably get it worse. Of course an enormous number of his shells are simply wasted. We have sat in our dugout waiting for him to hit it and then when he has finished we set to, to make it stronger so that now it looks like a fortress only unfortunately not as strong as one, He was shelling the 38th and us the other day. The men from the 38th cleared up this way and had just reached our dugout when a shell fell. It blew a man's brains out on

the side. I went outside and found him and although some of his brains were lying on the ground the man was still alive, we got him away immediately but felt less secure. The next day Capt Far came up and left his bicycle outside the door, Old Fritz opened up again, blew his bike to pieces and shook the old dugout up very much. The dugout is built in an old shell hole on the left of the Battery. He has dropped 77's, 4.2's, 5.9's and 8 inch shells around it and it has had convulsions often. Fergusson and I were coming home from the O.P when we decided to have a swim in the canal. We had a glorious swim and were just getting dressed when Fritz dropped two 4.2 inch shells 30 yards away. They accelerated our dressing. Two more dropped closer so we cleared out without finishing and ran for our lives, carrying ties, glasses, gas helmets etc etc. and old Fritz followed us all the way home. We have had gas nearly every night and about three nights ago I decided to sleep through it and the next day I decided I was dying. I felt dreadfully sick and will keep awake in future. It was my turn to stay a O.P last night for 24 hours. I set out in plenty of time but owing to the bad track I thought I would never get there. I got bogged in the mud and the two men with me had to pull me out. I was wearing rubber boots at the time and could not pull them out with my feet in them. By the time we reached O.P. we were covered in mud up to the hips and then had to sleep in a tiny little German dugout just big enough to hold us, The rain came in and Fritz shelled all night. My word it was cheerful. The battle of Flander commence at 3.50am 31/7/17 at zero hour every gun opened fire. It was a wonderful sight and although it was not daylight, the whole Country was lit up by the flashes of the thousands of guns. One could not hear a word being spoken and I could not help thinking of the end of the world. The earth was trembling violently for hours. Our intense bombardment lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes and then the rate of fire was lessened. About two hours after the opening the prisoners began to come in. We know very little about the "stunt" yet I know we were held up temporarily at a few points by machine guns but have now taken them.

Fritz has been giving us a particularly hot time lately and I am beginning to feel the strain. He sends over some 16 inch shells - about 5 everyday - They almost paralyse one.

Going up to O.P. the other night I got bogged and had to be pulled out by two men. We were relieved on the 6/7 of August by All9 Battery. Left for Steenwerckon the 8th and ordered into Action again on 9th. We thought we were out for a spell. Went on leave to England on the 9th Via Boulogne and Folkestone. Stayed at the Waldolf Hotel. Visited Mr Palmer then set out for the Lake District. Caught the train at Eustan 9.30am arrived Preston 1.50 pm where Mr and Mrs Barraclough met me with the car. Motored down to Blackpoir and stayed at Cleverleys Cydro for the week end then motored to Keswick on Lake Perwent water. Then motored back to Workington and stayed a day and a night I visited the Iron and Steel works there and went down the coal mine. Returned to Keswick Calling at the Golf Links on the way and played Golf. Remained at Keswick two days and visited Lakes Windermere, Ulleswater, Coniston, Buttermere, Loureswater, Derwentwater, Grasmere, Kizlmere, as well as the mountains and passes. We motored most of the time and the last day we drove 124 miles to Manchester, Visited the Westinghouse Iron and Steel Compors works. Went to Hippodrome in the evening. Left for London Midnight and arrived there 6am saw "Romance"

Saturday evening spent Sunday on the River at Richmond, Missed the leave train next day and went to the Palladium in the evening. Left for France the next day. Spent the day at Boulogne at Mr Irelands house. Left Boulogne at 4.30am 22nd arrived Bailleut 10.25am, and back to Battery 2pm. Aeroplanes over in the evening. They looked very pretty and as if on fire when they got caught in the search lights.

Very big bombs dropped by aeroplanes.

23/8/17 Battery being relieved by English Battery. We go to Steenwerck for a few days.

24th Left Section under Lt Gaynor left for New W Lines this morning at 7.15am.

8/9/17 We were billeted in Steenwerch for about a week. During that time we had a Battery Dinner. (Some Dinner) and often visited the town we also rode to Sailly Sur la Lys occasionally. On the 5th we got orders at 3am to shift. Of course we had to get up then and get ready. We trekked down to Borre which is near Hazebrouck. We marched through Steenwerch, La Verier, Menis, Strazeele to Borre. Yesterday I rode a bicycle to Sailly. We received orders that we go into action near Ypres (22 miles) tomorrow. Received photos from K.B.

9/11/17 We are at present out of action and resting at MORBECQUE. The last great battle of YPRES is over and the old 4th Div. has been practically wiped out. We have no guns, animal and very few men. Two months ago (Sept 9th) we went into action in front of Ypres, had a very thin time and lost many men killed and wounded. Lt. Tait was killed at this position whilst acting as Battery F.O.O. At one time all our guns were knocked out. Next position was in front of Chateau Wood. This was our most unfortunate position. Major Garling was gassed here so was Lt. Martin. Lt. Anderson was badly wounded and Lt. Greens and Lt. Hall badly wounded Lynch, Finn and several others killed, Billington and some more seriously wounded. I took over the Battery when all the Officer had been either hit, or gassed and was the one remaining Officer. One day three Officers and eleven other ranks were made casualties. Three days afterwards we were shelled very heavily and 16 of my men and 1 Englishman were hit or shell shocked. Had a roll call and there were only seven other men besides myself, that made 40 casualties in one week. The strain was getting unbearable and I was losing all my officers. Lt. Elliston then joined and two days afterwards he got hit. Then Lt. Florence joined and was gassed shortly afterwards. Ordered forward to Hanebeke Wood. After much trouble got all the guns in. Three were knocked out by direct hits and Cpt. Coles and Cpt. Mosely killed and Ben Dinghe, Summer Robertson badly smacked and several more wounded or gassed. I got gassed and could not sleep, eat or talk.

Made Major 1/10/17

Could not get rations up owing to shelling, bad country and wet weather. Ammunition a great source of worry owing to bad conditions. Shelling never ceasing day or night. Spent a month in this position and we took Broodscinde Ridge. Handed over to 7th Battery and moved forward to TOKIO just below the ridge. Next day the 7th and 8th Batteries had 8 killed and 5 wounded. Lt. Mosman was with me now and Capt. McAdam. Mosman got gassed but stuck it out with me. Relieved from Tokio on night of 25th Oct. We now had no guns and very few gunners. Our casualties had been terrific and we were so

short of men that when registering at Tokio I had to go and act as a Number 1 on the gun. I had one Sgt. and one gunner per gun. All stores and staff gear were lost by shell fire on the WESTHOER - ZONNEBEKE Rd. The Macre Menin road from Ypres and Westhoer to Zonnebeke was the most desolate sight I have ever seen or imagined. It is much worse than the Somme was last year. It is a scene of death, desolation and destruction for five miles. Hundreds of G.S. Wagons, Ammunition Wagons, guns, Howitzers and horses and dead men, all rotting and no chance at all to get them away. There are only two roads and all traffic for the front goes along them. The hum shells day and night but material, food and ammunition must be brought up. It very often happens that the Germans shells blow up the road both in front of and behind the traffic and then it cannot move. They have to abandon it all and the men only can get back (if they are lucky) across the mud. Next day all the wagons and horses etc. have been destroyed by the shell. On either side of the road. I have often wondered whether the cost of our great victory was worth it. We certainly found hundreds of dead Germans and could not bury them all and they simply rotted to skeletons under our eyes. The mud was our chief enemy as we had to keep to the roads or else we could not get forward at all. The shelling had to be faced and passed and the Germans.

Concentrated on these two roads. Getting the guns forward was an almost impossible task but had to be done if we wanted to continue our success. The men had to pull them through the mud with the wheels sinking down to the axle. I have never experienced such a trying time and every officer and man were just about done. We then pulled out to Remingherst. The Germans bombed us here and killed 60 add. horses, several remaining men and wounded 25. This was just about the end of all. After that we came down here to Morbecque near Hazebrouck for a rest.

George called to see me at Remingherst.

- 5/2/18 I am now in command of the 45th Battery 12th Army Brigade. I was sent to a ten day Veterinary Course at Boulogne. Left Morbeque on 13/11/17 entrained at Hazebrouck. Took Gunner Hinton with me. Had a very good time at the school and learned quiet a lot. My tent was blown away one night whilst I was asleep. The Battery moved to GAMARCHE rest area while I was away. Had great difficulty to find it and stayed one night at TREPORT. The Battery was billeted by itself at ACHIEUX. We were the best "turned out" in the Division. Expected to be out three months but after one week the Germans drove the British out and we were called up in reserve. I was detailed as Detaining Officer of the Division and lived for three days at La Chappelette. The Division detrained at PERONNE and billeted out a turn doing it. I had to hand over command of 37th Battery and given command of 39th. Had four shifts in 14 days whilst here. It was bitterly cold and snowed a great deal. We were standing by day and night ready to move at an hours notice if the Hun attacked. One morning we received orders to "stand to" at 1.5am and remained until 9.20am before orders came to "stand down". The division had a Competition for 15 pounds when we were at Peronne. The best Battery from each Brigade to be in the final. We won the Brigade Competition and the day of the Divisional Competition, the rival Battery would not turn out and had to forfeit. We had the inspection anyway and the G.O.C. complimented us and we won the prize. We had Christmas at Peronne. It was very cold and everything covered with snow. We had a very good time. Two days afterwards

we trekked to Rocquigny near Bapaune. It was a most bitterly cold day and my worst experiences in France, not so much with the cold as with the piercing wind which blew into us all the day. Next day we entrained for Bailleul and arrived there 8 hours afterwards at 7.30pm. It was very, very dark and we finished detraining at about 9pm. Then marched to our billets which just then, no one was sure about. Anyhow we trekked until about 12 midnight and I found myself at a village called MERRIS. It was bitterly cold and we were merely done so I decided to remain there. We pulled into a field and parked the Battery. There was a large frozen pond in so Capt. Ford and I cut three holes. The ice was easily six inches thick. Watered the horses then commenced to billet the men and finished about 1.30pm. In our billet the old woman got up and cooked us a meal. It was a very long time since I enjoyed a meal so much. Went to bed and remember no more until 9.15am. Remained in Merris one day then trekked to Goddeswelde. Remained two days then went into the line opposite Hollebeke. Our W Lines were the finest in France and I have never seen their equal before. Had a very easy time in this position. Promoted to Major 12/1/18 and transferred to 12th Army Bridage. Joined the Brigade 15/1/18 and was posted to 45th Battery. The W Lines were in a very dirty condition. I was sent down to take charge. The Brigade was relieved by 3rd Army Brigade and we changed W. Lines. A few days after the relief I went on leave to England 6/2/18. Visited Mr Ireland on my way over. Had a very rough passage. Everyone was sick. Had difficulty in getting a room but eventually got one at the Ivanhoe. Called to see the Bartons at Maida Vale. Then went to Keswick and stayed at the Royal Oak Hotel. Mrs Barraclough was there also Mr and Mrs Barraclough gave me a most excellent time and made the holiday one of my most enjoyable ones. We played golf and Climbed Latrigg. After leaving Keswick I went back to London. There we two Air raids whilst I was there. Went to see, 'Chu, Chin Chow,' 'The 13th Chair' and to the Palladium. Visited Colonel and Mrs Williams and we all had dinner with the Padre Capt. Stevenson. Called on Mrs Edwards and Lady Harrowly where I saw Miss Bowen. Went to a concert at Albert Hall and heard Murdoch play. Left London 21/2/18. Very cold trip across the channel. Had dinner with Mr Ireland and stayed the night Caught the train at 9.30am 22/2/18 and arrived Bailleul 5.30pm. Meet Gordon and had to walk to the Battery. Colonel Lloyd is now C.O. He has made a wonderful difference to the Brigade. We all have to polish our buttons and Badges and wear stiff caps. The men are to clean their buttons to also. We are certainly a very smart Unit. Lectures are frequent and no one can remain idle at all. I received a lot of Australian mail on my return also one from M.B. Capt. Weatherton is the horse master and stays with this Battery. He is a most delightful old gentleman and the nicest man I know. He has spent a large part of his life in Africa and is Quite a famous man in his way. Had the photo of the Battery taken two days ago. Officers of the Battery are Capt. Shoulder, Lieuts, Sharp Foster, Eades and the Tuetey. The C.O. inspect the Battery this afternoon.

24/4/18 We are now in action just in rear of ROBECCQ. After remaining in reserve for nearly two months at HALL FARM CAMP near Bailleuil the Hun attacked in the South near CAMBRAI and nearly reached AMIENS. He also got very active in our area and shelled the W Lines of H.Qrs and 112th Battery and 47 Bty very heavily. We had two horses Killed and two wounded also one man wounded. A shell hit the 47th Bty shed and killed or put out action 80 horses.

On 24th March, did a very long trek to REBECQ, Officer passing through MERVILE and CALONNE. We remained at Robecq for several days and then trekked to VRAUCOURT and DROUVIN where we stayed one night. We passed through BETHUNE. We then trekked to OLHAIN where we remained several days. During all this time we were G.H.Q reserve then the reserve of different Army Corps. At Olhain there was a most interesting old Castle built in 1202 and mentioned in the Three Muskateers. The House where we were billeted was over tow hundred years old and contained some rare old China. The country here was very pretty and hilly. We enjoyed this place. We were then rushed up to Arros where the Germans had advanced and we came into action just near the town. Our range was over 6000 yards. We were here two days when the Germans broke through at ARMENTAIRES. Sudden orders were received and we had to clear immediately. We were in action and settled down at 2pm, orders Came to move and we were on the road at 4.15pm. Trekked back near BETHUME and remained the night at MESNILLE RUITZ after trekking about 30 klms. We arrived there at 9.30pm the others about 12 midnight. It was pitch dark and strange place and it was hard work to settle down in the dark. Had our tea at 11pm.

Had to dash up to action near EPINETTE but before we got there the Hans took it while we were on the way so we had to gallop into action in the open just outside CALONNE. Hold him there from awhile and orders were received for us to move nearer the town, Which we did and come into action on the banks of the CLARENCE RIVER. We were the most forward Batteries and the Infantry in front very tired and the line very thin. The Portuguese had cleared out of here so there was practically no one in front of us. Had a very active night and in the morning found that the Germans had broken through again and we were cut off. He was machine gunning us things did not look at all bright it seemed certain we would be wiped out. I decided to make a dash for it and evade capture. Ordered the teams up while the enemy were kept at bay and we ran the gauntlet. It was most exciting and I think the Germans were too excited to take us easy. Anyway we galloped along the side of them and only lost one horse and no men or guns. How we did it I don't know. We retired through, REBECQ and this Battery was ordered to fight a rear guard action until the remainder got clear. This was about 9am on the 12th April. The Infantry arrived at about 6pm. We took up another position forward in the garden of a big Chateau the same day and in the evening went forward again and came into action near L'ECLIME. Next night we went forward again into action near the canal in front of Busnes. Shifted the Battery position early next morning to the other side of BUSNES, remained there a day and night then went forward again into action just behind RABECQ where we still are the Germans have attacked several times but each time has been driven back with heavy losses. We attacked once and pushed forward our line a little in front of REBCEQ near CALONNE. Mason was killed on this day before the attack. The attack was on night of 23/23rd April.

6/5/18 Returned to W. Lines last night for a spell. The Battery Position has been shelled very heavily during the last week and we have had many casualties. Three days ago I run two guns out and put them in Action on the BUSNES - ST VENANT road. It is an extremely good position only rather long range. Yesterday I was ordered to move two more guns out and run the first two farther forward and remain silent. LT Adams is in charge of the "Silent Guns".

Major Sydney James Walker War Dairy II

Went for a ride into AIRE several days ago. It was a delightful ride along the canal. The W. Lines shifted to CORNET BOURDOIS two days ago. Salvaged a light French Cart from ROBCEQ last night. Drizzle has made to-day a miserable one. The troops have never lived so well as during the last fortnight. More pork, fowls and potatoes than we could possibly eat. Everyone unit keeps a fowl yard and dairy. I have even seen them shifting their cows etc. It certainly seems very strange to me but if we did not use them the Germans would only kill them as they have done to large numbers and they are then wasted.

- 8/5/18 Received orders about 5.45pm that I was to report to 3rd Division and had to hand over Battery to Capt. Jacobs. This was most disappointing news and a great shock indeed to me. Returned to W. Lines and stayed the night after calling in at B.H.Q.
- 9/5/18 Rode into AIRE with LT Adams and had lunch there and inquired at the R.T.O's Officer for the 3rd Div. We called and reconnoitred the reserve positions on the way in.
- 10/5/18 Woods, Harper and I set out with the two horses and a French cart to trek to ALBERT. Passed through HAM-EN-ARTOIS and ST HILAIRE.

