



The Spire Sentinel



**The Newsletter & Magazine of The
Chesterfield Branch of The Western Front
Association**



ISSUE 81 - November 2022

Our aims are 'Remembrance and Sharing the History of the
Great War'.



Western Front Association Chesterfield Branch – Meetings 2022

Meetings start at 7.30pm and take place at the Labour Club, Unity House, Saltergate, Chesterfield S40 1NF

January	4th	.Branch AGM and Members Evening - 3 short presentations by Jon-Paul Harding, Andy Rawson and Grant Cullen
February	1st	`Steaming to The Front` - Britain`s Railways in The Great War by Grant Cullen
March	1st	`They Think It`s all Over` By Andy Rawson . Plenty has been said about the breaking of the Hindenburg Line. This presentation looks at the pursuit of the Germans which occurred during the final weeks of the war.
April	5th	Soldiers and Their Horses - Horses and Their Soldiers by Dr Jane Flynn - a sympathetic consideration of the soldier - horse relationship 1914-18
May	3rd	`Finding Deborah` by Mike Tipping. How the team that discovered tank Deborah D-51 went on to find me, and my journey to Deborah
June	7th	The Cost of the War' By Roy Larkin. Hansard tells us that the Great War of 1914-18 increased the National Debt to £7,435,000,000 or £377,144,063,927 at today's value which took 100 years to pay off.
July	5th	The Italian Front 1915-1918 by John Chester. Covers the fighting in Italy from beginning to end. Includes the contribution of the British and their part in ending the war.
August	2nd	Peter Hart returns to Chesterfield - last time was just before the first lockdown in March 2020. The title of Peter`s talk is Rupert Brooke and the `Glitterati` at Gallipoli`
September	6th	The Inventions Department by Richard Godber. A little known part of the Ministry of Munitions. Based upon Richard`s dissertation for his Wolverhampton MA, previously a very under researched area about which little was known.
October	4th	`The Fighting Fifth`and the attack at Bellewarde Ridge 16th June 1915 by John Beech. John has a strong personal connection with the Northumberland Fusiliers in this action
November	1st	`Shell Shock and the History of Psychiatry` by Jill Brunt. Based upon sessions on this subject presented to students at Northern College, Barnsley
December	1st	`British League of Help` by Dudley Giles. Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France. Some of these adoptions lasted only a few years, some (like Sheffield's adoption of Bapaume, Serre and Puisieux) survived until after WW2

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Just to let everyone know, the popular free 'Monday Night Webinars' will start again this month, and will be weekly up until Armistice and then fortnightly thereafter.

Those who have watched them before can register for the talks in the usual way, but for those who haven't seen them, if you go to the HQ website and click on 'Events', then 'National Events', it will take you to the individual talks and you can register online for as many as you like. Then on the day, you will receive an email link to join the talk.

The talks start at 20.00hrs. and last about an hour with a short Q&A afterwards. Spaces can be restricted, so book early!

The first talks are:

Monday 31 October - The Flying Sikh - Hardit Singh Malik, the RFC and the First World War

Monday 7 November - The Coal Black Sea: Winston Churchill and the Worst Naval Catastrophe of the First World War

Monday 14 November - Investigating the Australians at Pozieres

Monday 28 November - The Searchers: The Quest for the Lost of the First World War

Why not give them a try?



November Meeting – Jill Brunt

Jill started my working life as a Speech and Language Therapist, practicing in the NHS and treating both adults and children. A change in career and a Masters Degree led her in to Adult and University Education. She was Assistant Principal at Northern College, Senior Research Fellow and Director of Teaching in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Sheffield and CEO of an Awarding Body. She held two Visiting Professorships at Sheffield Hallam University and London South Bank University.

She is now a Chesterfield Borough Councillor with a Cabinet Portfolio for Health and Well-being. Also looking forward to being fully retired!

Shell Shock in WW1: the session will explore the position of psychiatry during the war, presenting symptoms and treatment for shell shock and the context in the UK for returning soldiers.

Any opinions expressed in this Newsletter /Magazine are not necessarily those of the Western Front Association, Chesterfield Branch, in particular, or the Western Front Association in general



Secretary's Scribbles

Dear Members and Friends,

Welcome to the November edition of our Branch Newsletter.

The Branch looked into the possibility of having representation at the WFA Commemoration Parade at the Cenotaph in London on November 11th. I am delighted that Jane Lovatt, Jon-Paul Harding, Yvonne Ridgeway and James Kay are all set to go with costs being met by Branch funds plus a generous grant given to Branches by WFA Central for this purpose.

Of course these guys will not be the only representatives of our Branch being in attendance. Tony Bolton will be there as National Chair and Rob Nash who is Parade Marshall. I can tell you that Rob has put in a power of work with the organisation of this event, liaising with the Metropolitan Police and various government agencies to ensure that it passes off smoothly.

Rob was one of the guests at Worksop Royal British Legion's Festival of Remembrance on October 15th. He was one of six veterans of the Falklands campaign of 1982 in attendance which was the keynote theme for the evening. Some of the veterans - including Rob - gave moving accounts of their time in the South Atlantic

This month - Tuesday 1st November we have local lady Jill Brunt coming to talk about '*Shell Shock and the History of Psychiatry*'. This talk is based upon sessions on this subject she presented to students at Northern College, Barnsley. Members may recall her husband Steve speaking to us last year about the CWGC and his new role within it.

Now that we are in last quarter of 2022 my thoughts are now turning to recruiting speakers for next year. Among those who will be in the line up will be Tim Lynch who received an award from the WFA for his MA Thesis. This was presented at our President's Conference earlier this year. For 2002 we had an amazing response from members volunteering to step forward and give a talk - look at Richard Godberfirst time ever....great talk. So - who is next?.

Seriously though we have a WFA speakers list so please let me have an idea of what topics you would like to hear being discussed and we will see what can be arranged.

Next month the presentation will be '*British League of Help*' by Dudley Giles.

Nearly 90 towns, cities, and organisations in the UK, Australia, Canada and Mauritius signed up in the period 1920-1922 to 'adopt' a village, town or city in the Devastated Zone of France. Some of these adoptions lasted only a few years, some (like Sheffield's adoption of Bapaume, Serre and Puisieux) survived until after WW2. Dudley you may recall organised our on line meetings jointly with our friends at Lincoln during the pandemic when it was not possible to organise face to face meetings

Best wishes, Grant Cullen Branch Secretary 07824628638



BRANDED GOODS AVAILABILITY

New items are always being considered, so please check the Branded goods part of the shop for all items available.

Prices are inclusive of postage within UK (Branded Items Nos 1-11)

www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/wfa-branded-items/?p=2

or call Head Office (Sarah Gunn or Maya Shapland) on 020 7118 1914

And the (Branded Clothing, Nos 12- 18) note new prices (under) effective from 1st July.

Order direct from supplier (West Coast Workwear) www.westernfrontassociation.com/shop/branded-clothing/
or ring (0800 169 2228 or 01704 873301)



1	Fridge Magnet	(£5)	59mm dia, front metal plate, high strength neodymium magnetic backplate, and plastic mylar front cover
2	Anniv' Coaster	(£8.50)	4" in diameter hand crafted slate. Individually polished, screen printed by hand and backed by a baize
3	Mousemats	(£6)	196 x 235mm fabric surface and are of high quality. They have a rubberised base layer
4	Bookmarks	(£2)	(dims 55 x 175mm) rich UV High Gloss Coating provides protection against stains and damage
5	Baseball Caps	(£8)	Lightweight 5 Panel cotton cap, adjustable with velcro rip-strip, one size fits all
6	Ties	(£11)	Length 142cm, width 9cm (at widest part), 100% Polyester
7	Lapel Badges	(£2.50)	25mm Dia. Die struck + imitation hard enamel, Silver Nickel Plating, Butterfly clutch pin
8	Mug	(£10)	11oz ceramic mug (95mm high x 85mm diameter) features the bold official WFA logo design (two sides)
9	Messenger Bag	(£27)	37 x 29 x 11cm, 100% Cotton. Full cotton lining. Zippered organiser section, Capacity:13 litres
10	Despatch Bag	(£30)	40 x 30 x 12 cm, (10) Washed Canvas, dual rear pouch pockets. Multiple zippered pockets. Capacity: 14 litres
11	Shoulder Bag	(£25)	40 x 28 x 18 cm, (10) (11) Polyester. Internal valuables pocket. Zippered front pocket. Capacity: 14 litres
12	Oxford Shirt	(£27)	Kustom Kit Short Sleeve Corporate Oxford Shirt. Easy iron button down collar, 85% cotton, 15% polyester
13	Breathable Jacket	(£71)	Russell Hydro Plus 2000 Jacket. Nylon taslon with PU Coating
14	Rugby Shirt	(£25)	Front Row Classic Rugby Shirt, 100% Cotton
15	Fleece	(£24)	Regatta Thor 111 Fleece Jacket, 100% polyester anti pill
16	T-shirt	(£17)	Russell Classic Cotton T-Shirt. 100% ringspun cotton
17	Sweat Shirt	(£22.50)	Gents Russell Jerzees Raglan / Ladies Fruit Of The Loom Raglan
18	Polo Shirt	(£20.50)	Russell Cotton Pique Polo Shirt. 100% cotton



The Fighting Fifth and The First Attack on Bellewaarde Ridge 16 June 1915

John Beech MA

It was a pleasure for Branch Chair Tony Bolton to welcome our speaker for the evening, John Beech, to our October meeting. John used to be an ever present at Chesterfield Branch meetings but hasn't been so regular since taking over the Chair of East Midlands (Ruddington) Branch and taking his Great War studies to a higher level with Wolverhampton University.

We are grateful to John for helping us out having had to hastily re-arrange our speakers programme only a few weeks ago. John was only just back from a visit to the Western Front,, was that some Flanders mud that you had on your shoes John.....??

After a bit of an IT glitch, John launched into his presentation - aided by some informative handouts made available to all attendees



- The Importance of Bellewaarde Ridge
- Preparations
- Attack on Bellewaarde Ridge 16 June 1915
- Cost of Action
- Outcome
- Asides



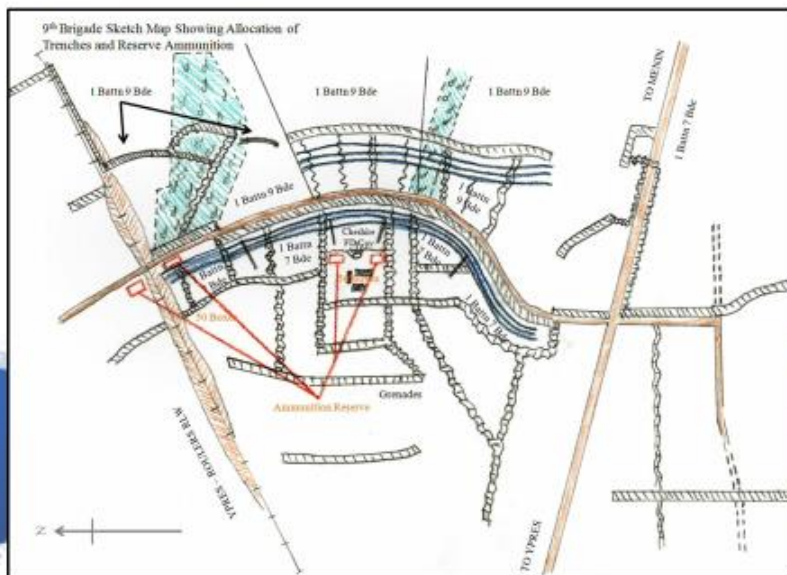
Google Maps view of the battlefields today where this action took place in 1915. John referred to this map frequently comparing with the maps (everyone got a copy) as issued by the BEF and the Germans in 1915

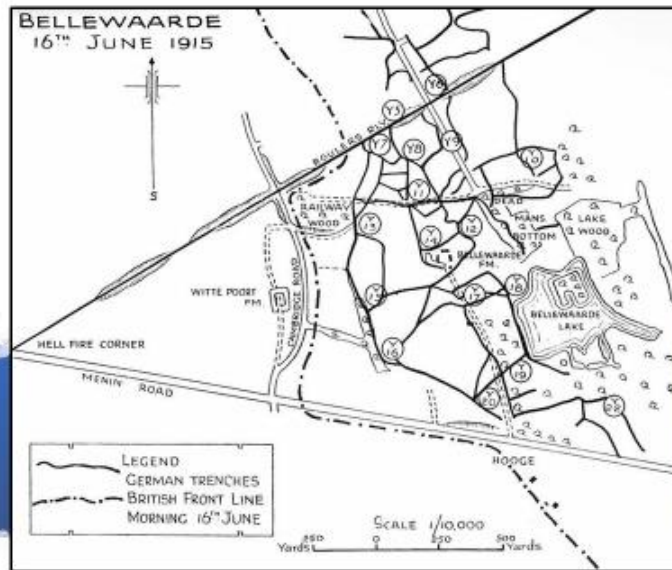


The Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge 24-25 May 1915



Württembergisches Reserve Infanterie Regiment Nr. 246





Lieut. Col. Clement Yatman
Battalion Commander
Slightly Wounded



Captain William Norman
Herbert
Adjutant
Wounded



Captain & Quartermaster
Arthur Landen



Lieutenant Benjamin
George Gunner
Transport Officer

Officers of 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers
16 June 1915



Captain Gerard Orby Sloper
Machine Gun Officer
Wounded and Missing
Later Confirmed POW



Captain Harold Richard Sandilands
W Company
Wounded



Captain Leonard Vale Bagshawe
X Company
Killed



Captain Robert Collingwood Roddam
Y Company
Killed

**Officers of 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers
16 June 1915**



Lieutenant Eric Edward Dorman-Smith
Z Company
Slightly Wounded



Lieutenant Hugh Myddleton Heyden
W Company
Wounded



Second Lieutenant Charles James Shelly Dalblac
W Company
Wounded and Missing
Later Confirmed as Killed

**Officers of 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers
16 June 1915**



Lieutenant George Herbert
Fearnley-Whittingstall
X Company
Wounded



Second Lieutenant
Hugh Graham John
X Company
Wounded and Missing
Later Confirmed as Killed



Second Lieutenant Hugh
Urquhart Scrutton
Y Company
Wounded

Officers of 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers
16 June 1915



377 Sergeant
Alfred Hobday
Y Company
Listed as Wounded
Later Confirmed Killed in
Action



3558 Lance Corporal
Austin Frank Broughton
W Company
Listed as Wounded
Later Confirmed Killed in
Action



9285 Lance Corporal
Edward Beech
W Company
Killed in Action



9127 Lance Corporal
Albert Joynson
Awarded DCM
Bellewaarde Ridge

Men of 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers
16 June 1915

	Officers	NCO and Men
Killed Between 15 th and 16 th June 1915	5	147
Died of Wounds Between 17 th June and 30 th September 1915		12
Wounded	9	133
Prisoners of War including 4 Men who died whilst Prisoners of War	1	9
Other Dead		1
Returned to Unit		131
Survived / POW Listed as Missing on War Diary		6
Total Casualties	15	439
Attack Strength	15	645
Total Casualties as Percentage of Attack Strength	100%	68.06%
Killed as Percentage of Attack Strength	33.33%	21.09%

Casualties 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers 16 June 1915



Burry
 Offiz. d. R. I. Inf.-Reg. 246
 (Württemberg), gef. a. 16. Juni
 1915 bei Beginn Stillestande

Leutnant der Reserve
Adolf R. Burry
 No. 2 Kompanie
 Gefallen



Schellhorn
 Offiz. d. R. I. Inf.-Reg. 246
 (Württemberg), gef. a. 16. Juni
 1915

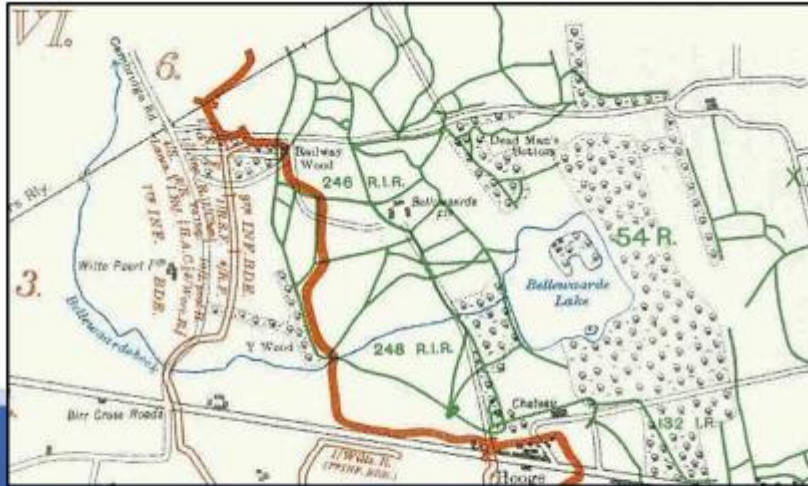
Leutnant
Karl Schellhorn
 No. 3 Kompanie
 Gefallen



Häußler
 Offiz. d. R. I. Inf.-Reg. 246
 (Württemberg), gef. a. 16. Juni
 1915 bei Beginn

Leutnant
Eduard Häußler
 No. 5 Kompanie
 Gefallen

Officers of Württembergisches Reserve Infanterie Regiment Nr. 246 16 June 1915



The Attack on Bellewaarde Ridge 16 June 1915



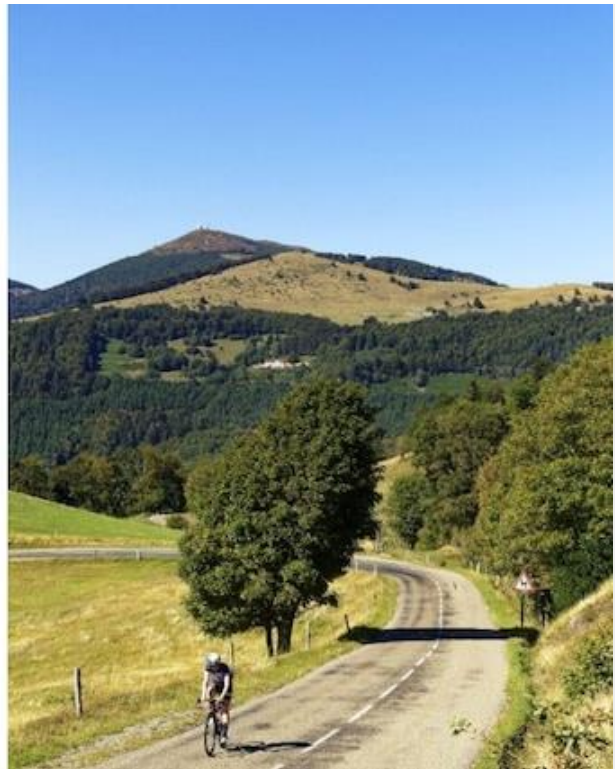
3264 Private Frederick Alexander Fyfe Z Company
1/10th King's Regiment (Liverpool Scottish)
16 June 1915

These photos were taken by Private Frederick Alexander Fyfe of Liverpool Scottish (the 1/10th King's (Liverpool) Regiment). Before the war Fyfe was a newspaper photographer. There exists a series of images he took (against regulations) of life in the front line. This photograph is perhaps the most graphic as it shows the situation at about 6am on 16 June during an attack at Bellewaarde by his battalion. The flag on the right (which would have been yellow and red) is to enable artillery observers to note the progress of the attack and therefore (theoretically) avoid shelling of one's own troops.



3832 Private Herbert Francis Burden
1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers
'Shot at Dawn' 21 July 1915

Herbert Francis Burden (22 March 1898 - 21 July 1915) was a soldier in the British Expeditionary Force during the First World War. Born in 1898 in Lewisham, south-east London, Burden is generally accepted as having lied about his age in order to enlist at the age of 16. Having joined the 1st South Northumberland Fusiliers, he soon deserted, returned to London and joined the East Surrey Regiment, whom he also soon deserted. Rejoining his old battalion, he was sent to France when the army believed him to be 19 years old, and he probably fought at the Battle of Bellewaarde Ridge in May 1915. Having already gone absent without leave (AWOL) from his unit on multiple occasions, he left his post once again the following month—he said to see a friend in the neighbouring regiment—but he was arrested and accused of desertion. Found guilty, he was executed by firing squad two days later aged 17. In 2001 his case, and his image, was the basis for a memorial statue in the National Memorial Arboretum to those who had been unfairly executed by 20th-century standards. Five years later, Burden and the other men were granted pardons by the British government.



Tom Heap cycled 621-miles through France to retrace his family's footsteps. By the time they reached northern France, one of Tom Heap's fellow cyclists on the 621-mile Western Front Way was reduced to stuffing clumps of grass in his underpants. The unfortunate cyclist's modern touring-bike cycle seat was bruising his backside.

It was a moment of great glee for Heap, who was traversing this newly plotted route - which carves south to north across the breadth of France from the Swiss mountains to the Belgian coast at Nieuwpoort - on a 1920s cycle with rod gears, a steel frame and a metal-sprung leather seat.

Heap had feared that his novelty vehicle, which weighs 17kg compared to today's average of ten, would prove a bumpy ride, yet it rode like an "absolute joy". "They made those seats surprisingly comfortable," he laughs.

These privations were nothing to the experience of the men who inspired these twin commemorative hiking and biking routes, which will launch on November 7. Over the war's 51 month duration, nine million men perished from combat and disease on the Front: a 400-mile stretch of trench systems that formed the principal theatre of war.

Heap's two great uncles were amongst the Great War's fallen: a sporty young man called Thomas Cunningham Gillespie, killed in action near La Bassée in north-east France, and his intellectual older brother Alexander Douglas Gillespie, a pupil barrister who became an officer in 1915, his commission having been delayed for a year due to his short-sightedness.

Alexander Douglas Gillespie was a witty correspondent and wrote a series of letters from the Front to his family and former headmaster at Winchester school, including a

flurry of missives, in the summer of 1915, that set down his dream that no man's land would become a pilgrimage route, a via sacra, at this brutal war's end.

"These fields are sacred in a sense..." Gillespie wrote to his former headmaster from the trenches at Loos. "I wish that when peace comes our government might combine with the French government to make one long avenue between the lines from the Vosges to the sea... a fine broad road in the 'No Man's Land' between the lines, with paths for pilgrims on foot and... trees for shade."

The Western Front

In 2014, in the aftermath of the World War One centenary celebrations, historian Anthony Seldon, who had chanced upon Gillespie's correspondence when writing a book, and Heap, who is a trustee of the Western Front Way charity, set about the long process of realising Gillespie's 1915 dream.

Today the two Western Front Ways (thewesternfrontway.com) - cycle and foot routes which at points overlap - have been plotted along their length with the help of local French and Belgian partners, and mapped out on an app, which includes images, audio recollections and snippets of social history (such as letters home from young men on the front) as well as recommendations of monuments to see and hotels en route where you can hang your muddied boots, or cycling helmets. The walk takes around 40 days to complete from mountains to coast, and the cycle route around 12 days.

Heap's journey along the cycle Western Front Way on his 1920s upright cycle, the charmingly named OK Perfection Roaster, was undertaken over 11 sunny days in September, in the company of members of Heap's family and friends and Western Front Way supporters. Their journey began in Pfetterhouse, a Swiss border town with an alpine character where the air was fresh and the merry band of cyclists were brimming with excitement as Heap read from Gillespie's correspondence to the gathered cyclists.



Tom Heap and his cycling comrades tackle France's Western Front Way

The greatest cycling challenges come in the earliest stretches of the south-north route: there's a 1,680m climb on day two and in the Vosges, a range of low mountains near the German border in Eastern France, which the cyclists reached on

day three, sinuous roads twist through steeply wooded hillsides and vantage points from the Grand-Ballon, the highest summit, overlook the swooping flight of eagles.

Sustenance was provided by Heap's sister Alice and wife Tammany, who followed the tour in a supply car and popped up at lunchtimes with crisp baguettes, livid red local saucisson, feathery mille feuille and high-calorie flapjacks that Tammany made from late-travel writer Jan Morris' recipe from her 1953 Everest expedition.

Today much of the north of France has been given over to the concrete expanses of 21st century infrastructure, but many southern stretches of the route are as they would have been in the Gillespies' day.

"The pattern of the settlements is the same, though some villages were flattened during the First World War and of course the fields have been endlessly ploughed over," he says. But at points where the Western Way Route route traverses woodlands - at Fontenelle, Ban de Sapt and Tranchee de la soif, near Verdun - "the trenches and cratered landscape of war is fully visible," Heap recalls.



War memorials can be spotted along the route

The north of France is well known to the British for its war commemoration tourism - the Thiepval memory to the war dead at the Somme in Authuille; the World War II landing beaches in Normandy - but regions of the south such as Verdun, where the French suffered 377,231 casualties in a battle that ground on through 11 months of 1916, were, Heap says, unexpectedly moving.

"It's beautiful countryside around Verdun, all rolling greens, and the battlefield still felt tense with the memory and brutalities of war," he explains.

The cyclist band, nursing various bruises and scrapes by the route's final days, also stopped to pay tribute at the plaques to Thomas and Alexander, who died on 25th September 1915 in the first Battle of Loos, killed while leading a charge against an enemy position. He was the only officer to get as far as German trenches that day, and died where he fell.

Rebooting remembrance

The Western Front Way's patrons hope that the new route will be a novel way of interacting with the past, a means of "rebooting remembrance" as living memory fades. Heap imagines that the Western Front Way will be a little like the Santiago de Compostela, the famous camino that some pilgrims walk to commune with religion, some for the physical challenge, and others for the sheer pleasure and camaraderie of the hike.



Tom Heap conquered the route on a 90-year-old push bike

"People don't have to be morbid and walk about war monuments looking at their shoes," is the way Heap sees it. "You can do it as an endurance route, for its geography, or as a wine tour - you will still be marinated in the history of this important war."

Despite the fact he conquered the route on a 90-year-old push bike - suggested by Heap's cycling enthusiast son Dugal - cycling the The Western Front Way was also, for Heap, a thoroughly 21st century project of commemoration, in an era in which grand-scale 'completist' land challenges, such as Scotland's scenic North Coast 500, are all the rage.

"There's something special about being in the landscape that witnessed war, and moving slowly across distance through this landscape," Heap says. "It brings you a little bit closer to understanding those who lived through it. Were these the wild flowers and sedges my great uncles saw? Is this a trench they dug? It's all quite spine-tingling."

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In the last issue of the Newsletter I published the diary of Private Walter Roddis , here is another that of Sydney G Cane dated May 1918 after a wound injury required his repatriation to Netley Hospital , Southampton

S.G. Cane. 10.5.18.

Book I

being a brief history of my travels & experiences,
until the Great German Offensive on March 21st.

"Preparations for Departure":-

The 14th of September 1917, will be a memorable day, it being the last day we spent in England, before departing for France. During the day, the camp was kept extra lively by the energies of the Pipe & Drum band. Everyone was getting his kit well packed, & distributing his spare kit & that which was unnecessary to carry, amongst those lads who were not in the draft. The authorities prepared for us a real good substantial tea and all did well. At about 6 pm one could hear the strains of mirth and merry-making coming from the wet carteen, and on looking in that direction could see the place crowded to the out-side, while glasses of beer were being continually freely handed round.

The time arrived for us to "fall in", so receiving the order, we put on our packs & equipment, picked up our rifles and lined up. We were then formed up as a draft in companies, A.B.C. & D., the roll was called, & a few speeches made, and then after much cheering of the Colonel etc., we proceeded on our march to Minster; (about an 8 miles march). As we marched out of the gates and down the road, those lads who were not going & many civilians lined the roadside, several being overcome. It was a noisy march, but a historic one, for while some filled with drink appeared indifferent to the real meaning of the march, others felt that lump rising in their throats and the pull at the strings of the heart which one feels when they have to leave their home and those they love, & then the homeland. About midnight we arrived at Minster station (Kent) and boarded the train which was to take us to Folkestone. Nothing of interest took place during the ride, as we felt very tired & sleepy. Arriving at Folkestone we marched to a drill hall of "The Buffs" & were billeted there the night. Tired out we laid our wearied bodies on the floor & with a blanket over us slept peacefully.

Farewell England -

The next morning, reveille was sounded at 4 o'clock, so we arose, & washed, had our breakfast & prepared once more for another little march. At 6 am we moved off to the harbour & the boat-side, & were soon aboard. Before we sailed, lifebelts were served to all, & were to be fastened to our bodies. About 8 am the boat began to move and very soon we were under way for France. We cast longing eyes at dear old England's shores & cliffs, which were soon looking dim in the haze, but very soon the hills of France came into view. Our escort of 2 or 3 British & 1 French destroyer & an airship led us safely across until we ran into the port of Boulogne, about 10 or 10.30 am Sept. 15th, and very soon unloaded.

Bon Jour France! -

Having unloaded all our draft of 500, we were lined up in one of the streets of Boulogne & counted, & then proceeded on our way to the Rest Camp on the hill-top. I do not know what Boulogne as a whole is like, but our impressions of what we saw of it were not very good, however it may be saw its worst part. Arriving at the Rest Camp we received various orders, were allotted tents for the night, & then left to content ourselves with the Y.M.C.A. Being tired, we soon got to bed. (kit, is the army term for bed).

On the march. -

On the next morning Sept. 16th, at 8 o'clock, we had a Medical Inspection of about a few seconds per man, (a walk down the ranks) & then advanced on our way to our base at Etaples; being accosted all the way by numerous French women, girls & boys, who were anxious to sell us apples, chocolate or cigarettes. It was a long march, about 18 miles, but on the way we

called at a Rest Camp & had 1 hour dinner halt, which was very welcome to all. After that we trudge on, passing through Candlers, & eventually arriving at Staples between 5 & 5 pm. We were very tired, dusty & thirsty, & literally felt worn out. After being allotted our tents, 16 in each tent, we were given some tea, which everyone greatly relished. At night we settled down in our crowded tent, & what with the smoking, one was in a perfect state of perspiration.

Our Brief Sojourn At Staples. -

However we slept fairly well, & the next morning after breakfast we had a Medical Exam; after that we drew the remainder of our kit. During the morning we went through a "lacrimary gas" test, & also had a kit inspection. The next day, Tuesday the 18th, we paraded in "Battle order" & marched to the "Bull-ring". We stopped there all day, & had various lectures on gas, & also passed through the "Cloud gas" test. At the end of the day we were very tired. In the evening some of us used to visit the "Soldier's Christian Association" hut, & there a Scotch Sergeant-Major used to give addresses & make earnest appeals & at the conclusion of the meeting he invited all of us to go into a little room for prayer & guidance. On the whole these meetings were very inspiring & helpful & have brought blessing to many.

The next morning the Depot Sergeant-Major came round with a list of the names of men to proceed to the 7th Battn: "The Queens", Royal West Surrey Regts, who were then lying at Bringham in the St Omer district, and I was one booked to go. We commenced to en-train about 8 am, & moved off about 10 am; proceeding to a little station called Arneke, via Calais. Our journey was made as usual in goods trucks, and being fresh to this mode of travelling, I naturally got against the door & sat there with my feet dangling outside. From this position I had a good view of the country we passed. At about

7 pm we arrived at Arneke station and marched from there to Eringenhem. It poured with rain & we got there wet through about 10 or 11 pm after much tramping about. We were then distributed out amongst the companies, & found them living in barns. After discarding what wet garments we could, we laid down on the straw, with no blanket or covering, & tried to sleep. Being tired we were able to do so for a few hours.

Eringenhem. -

Early the next morning the 20th we arose & got ourselves ready for parade. The water we had to wash in came from a dirty and green pond, & we washed in any old tin we could find. Then followed the usual routine with the Quartermaster-Sergeant. Of course he wanted all our particulars etc., & then took us to have the blue (Batt.n. colour) sewn on our tunics, & painted on our steel helmets. After he had finished with us the Company Sergeant-Major came out to give us a lecture as per usual, on what we must & must not do. Then we were dismissed & went off down the road to a cottage & bought some coffee. After dinner we went out into a field & wrote our letters.

In the evening there were night operations going on, in preparation for an attack at Ypres, in the Poelcappelle sector, the object being to capture the enemy's position known to us as "the Brewery", only of course in case night attack should be necessary. On Sat. 22nd we were inspected by the new Colonel, each man, individually. The next day, Sunday, was the day appointed for moving, & so we had to start packing up. Our company (D) was the last to leave, & after making our billets tidy, we started on our march to Esquiback station. Here we entrained for Poperinghe, - a town a few miles behind Ypres but often shelled & continually bombed. Here the station-master provided the means for enemy aircraft to learn the movements of the trains by the manipulation of lights, thus proving he was a spy. Of course he was shot.

We arrived at the station about 11 pm, & marched through the ruined town & out to "School Camp". The guide lost his way, and consequently we traversed the same ground many times, but eventually got to the camp at 3 am on the Monday, worn out. Having been shown our huts we threw our packs & equipment off & laid down on the bricks with an overcoat over us & went to sleep. The next job we had was after breakfast & then we were sorted out into huts as regards Sections & Platoons. All that week we were training hard for the intended attack at Poelcappelle. On the Saturday evening all was going well, & quiet when about 8 pm, suddenly & without any warning several aerial bombs were dropped by Fritz, into the camp & there were about 200 casualties. Of course this was our first taste of it, but things went very well, & we laid flat in our huts & waited, although a great many went outside to see the fight in the air.

On Sunday all was serene except for the taste of the air-raid still hanging about us. In the morning we had a service by an haystack. The chaplain was a Major with the M.C. (Military Cross) & he was a thoughtful & sincere speaker. He arranged a service for us in the evening, in the R.A.M.C. hut, & we thoroughly enjoyed the meetings. During the week which followed we went on with the training & at night for several times in succession we had raids. However we got safely through that week & arrived at another Sunday. By this time a Y.M.C.A. Marquee had been erected so we held our service there. The Major took for his text Deut. 1. 5 - 5v "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount, turn you & take your journey." This being our last day at the camp before proceeding to the line, we held a Communion service after the service, which was very inspiring. In the evening a service was held by the Y.M.C.A. worker, which was very good. It was a pouring wet night.

en route for line. -

On Monday, Oct. 8th we had to pack up, ready to march to a camp in a

little wood a few miles out of Popoehinge, called "Dirty Bucket Camp". We lived here in little wooden huts, & at night were subjected to constant air-raids. In the same wood, there were a large number of tanks sheltered. The next day we prepared and packed up to go into the line. In the afternoon motor lorries took us to a place where batteries were firing most vigorously, the name of the place was either Essex Farm, Cain French, Kimpton Park racecourse or First Park. These places were all in the district but owing to a little muddle I am not sure where we were. We got some shovels & boxes of bombs etc, which made walking very difficult & carrying was heavy. Our next job was to get to a shattered pill-box for the night, & to get there we had to go knee deep in mud & water. By ditches & streams, through shellholes & sunken roads, we travelled, & at last reached our destination for the night. Some were fortunate enough to get in under cover, other poor fellows had to remain outside all night. I was fortunate enough to be half in & half out. During the night, which will be remembered by all, the Germans were shelling us with 5.9 & 4.2 shells, the former is his favourite & a very deadly shell. It is a similar shell to our 6" howitzer.

The next morning the shelling increased & several enemy planes came over, then they would dip rather low & register a battery or two, & then over would come salvos of shells. Then an aerial fight would take place, & Fritz could be seen scampering off home. About tea-time a few of us had to go a short distance to get some tins of Bully Beef, & on the way we passed a comrade, who had made the great sacrifice lying by the duck-boards. It was a sad sight, & being the first of its kind, made one a bit creepy. Let me state here that duck-boards are those used on bad ground to make a walking track for Infantry, & any who may be walking. At Ypres practically all the tracks were of duck-boards, as the ground was covered with shell-holes full of water, & the whole area was almost inundated with water. There were seldom any trenches & we had to dwell when in the line in

repaired shell-holes, or an old German pill box.

Hoelcarville,-

We arrived back with the Bully Beef, & the Boche were still shelling very heavily, & as time was hanging on our hands we watched the shells bursting around the battery behind us. Two or three guns were put out of action, & the crews obliged to scatter for shelter. Soon after tea, as it got dusk, we were taken on the journey for the line. For some little time we kept to the duck-board track, but soon we were led off on to rough ground. Very lights were constantly put up by the enemy, & somehow they must have discovered our movements, for suddenly we were exposed to heavy shrapnel fire. To add to our difficulties our leaders lost their way & could not trace connections. For a little while we had to lie still while efforts were made to find the way. At last we were led on over all sorts of obstacles, & knee deep in mud, when suddenly Fritz put a hurricane of shrapnel on us which swept the ground, & there were cries & groans of the wounded. At last we reached some spot, where we were told to dig in. Not knowing where we were, we commenced digging a hole for ourselves to get in. I dug so hard that I was in a great state of perspiration. However we finished the job & got into the place in "quick time". There was just enough room in width to take each one, but as it was not very long, we had to sit with our legs cramped up.

We sat huddled up together on our packs, with our water-proof sheets over us, & in the morning (11th) about 4 o'clock, our artillerymen opened fire & put up a lively & intensive barrage on Fritz. Then about 6 am the "Royal West Kents", "Buff's", & "East Surreys" went over the top to take a place called "the Brewery", while our Baitn. the "Queens", "Royal West Surreys", remained in support. The mud and shell-holes were awful, & it was almost impossible to go a step without sinking in to our knees.

We were wearing sacking over our puttees but this was soon round our feet. The fellows who went over were therefore handicapped, & got hung up, & consequently had to come back, the attack resulting in a failure. There was a great loss of men in this encounter, practically a whole company of "The Buffs" were taken prisoner.

Owing to the attack failing to produce its intended results the plans were upset, & to make matters worse the Boche put up a 36 hours bombardment on our positions which made it an utterly impossible thing to get rations up to us. As the position was we were only to have remained in the line for 24 hours, & had only taken rations accordingly. Unfortunately we were not relieved & Friday morning (12th) came, & we had no rations. My mate, Jack Adams, had no water left, so as I had taken the precaution to reserve my bottle, only having a sip at intervals, I shared what I had left with him, only allowing each of us a sip. Food having gone, we had only a tin of jam left, so Jack & I ate that, with one spoon. All the while we were standing in mud & water.

Presently someone discovered he had some tea & sugar, so we got some small-hole water & boiled some tea. That day it rained for a long time & we were under heavy shell fire all day. The officers told us to live in hopes of being relieved that night. During the afternoon we could see movements in the enemy's lines, & so we had orders to dig in a fresh place, & fix our bayonets & be ready for a counter-attack. No attack came, & night drew nigh, but no relief came. Sleep was almost impossible but we dozed now & again, & night sped quickly past & morning came & still no relief had appeared. We were getting hungry, for it was Saturday morning, & we had had no good meal since Wednesday. However the officers tried to cheer us up by telling us we should probably be going out that night. Shells were still falling near & irksome. Presently a shell dropped & burst a few yards from the parapet, & mud & water flew all over us. Two of the lads in the trench or rather hole, with us, received shell-shock,

one slightly, but the other very badly & lost his speech. Several others were wounded. Feeling rather cold Jack & I huddled up together under our sheets to keep warm. At about five o'clock, we received the unwelcome order to proceed on to the front line & relieve the troops already there. Everyone was feeling done up, & all our water was gone.

When it grew darker we began to move up to the position we were to hold. Fritz continually sent up lights & put his machine-guns on us, while we went on floundering in the mud. At last we got to the position, & once there, we had to keep low & quiet. Just by this position was a huge shell-hole, & so a few of us got into it, & found many of our fellows who had made the great sacrifice lying there. It was not a very pleasant place to be in & the smell was very nasty, but the hole gave us shelter so we remained for a time. At the edge of this shell-hole were several logs, so we decided to get under them. We had not been there long when a platoon officer came round & said we had better return to the place we were in, but soon after he told us we could return to the logs. It did not take us long to get out of it, & we soon found a place in the logs where we could stay. Sunday morning came, & we could hear the aeroplanes fighting overhead. How thirsty we all were, & very hungry. A shell dropped near by & killed one & wounded three. The day wore on & I constantly thought of all at home singing in the church's and chapel's in peace, & of the time when I used to attend myself. How we did crave for water. At last good news came that we were to be relieved & that we should soon be going out.

About 7 pm we commenced to go out, & unfortunately the guide missed his way, & we were wandering about in the mud & shell-holes for many hours. At last we struck the track & were able to make headway. Presently we picked up with the captain & he took us on down a duck-board track. We had got away down a hundred yards or so, when the order came "about turn" & we had to retrace our steps & get on to another track. Fellows were so thirsty that they took off their steel helmets & filled them with

water from shell-holes & then drank from them. After a while we resumed our journey, feeling very tired, & our packs hung very heavily. We had gone a good distance when Fritz put over some very large gas shells, so we doubled up & escaped its effects. The journey was still a long way, & it was not until 3 am Monday (15th) that we arrived at the dug-outs along the Ypres, Yezer-Comaines canal, after 8 hours walking, for we could not march. Everyone was absolutely done up, hungry & thirsty & a great number were suffering the effects of trench feet. My own feet were all numbed, white & shrivelled, but soon they received their usual circulation, although they were exceedingly sore for several days afterwards & caused me to hobble about.

Eventually we got down to kip & slept until 10 am when the Quartermaster-Sergeant came round & called us, so we got up & had a good breakfast. Throughout that day Monday, we washed & cleansed our kit for it was covered in mud & even the things in our packs were soaked with muddy water. We remained at these dug-outs until Tuesday morning, when we packed up & were conveyed back to "Dirty Bucket Camp" in motor lorries. It was a great relief to get away from the thunder & roar of the guns, & it was not long before the canteen was infected by us, with the hope of obtaining biscuits and chocolate & some cigarettes. Biscuits & chocolate have almost become the favourite relish of the troops in France. At night the camp was visited by German airmen who dropped their bombs quite freely.

All went well until Saturday (20th), when we had orders to pack up for the line again, as we had to go & hold it for 36 hours. At dinner-time we marched off & got into the lorries, & were taken up to within a few miles of the line, as far as it was safe to go without being observed. - It would be as well for me to explain what a fellow has to carry when going into this part of the line. There is his equipment, pack, an extra (full) water-bottle carried in pack; sometimes a shovel, or bag of bombs; one or two petrol cans full of water, & perhaps a sand-bag of miscellaneous articles. -

Having unloaded all the lorries, we proceeded on our way to the line, & not with a great deal of shelling. Behind us our guns were roaring, Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! & the enemy's were meeting us Whizz-z-z-z-Krupp - p - p - Krupp - p - p -. Then came the gas shells, & dropping almost at our feet they spread into a great cloud of poison gas. Eventually we got into our positions with only a comparatively small number of casualties. Our positions were a few small holes with a few men in each. We felt very tired when we got there & so it did not take us long to settle down, only we had to keep a look-out for gas. With our water-proofs thrown over our heads we rested the night. In the morning the Boche must have seen a movement or held suspicions, for he shelled our positions very heavily all day Sunday (21st), & it was a very nerve trying time. Fortunately we did not get many casualties as most of the shells dropped either in front or behind us. After tea we were sitting, counting the hours to the time when we should go out, which was to be 1 am that night.

One particular note to make on this days encounter is the fact that nearly every-man offered up a silent prayer to his Maker; the shelling was so very intense & we thought every minute would bring some catastrophe. At 7 pm an officer came round for some men to go with a party with rations to the front line. He wanted 4 or 5 men & as I was one of the near ones I "clicked" the job; (army term for "got" the job). In such cases there is no time to waste, so without reasoning why, because,

"There's not to reason why!

There's but to do or - die,"

so I jumped out of the position & followed with the others to the ration-dump. Here we were loaded with either 2 backfills of rations, or 1 or 2 petrol tins of water. It fell to your humble to carry a couple of tins of water. These tins are heavy & awkward to carry, & to add to the difficulties, we had to walk knee deep in mud & through shell-holes. However we arrived at our destination & delivered the rations & water.

Our officer went down the dug-out with the other company officer & remained there some time, I presume drinking rum or some intoxicant. When he came out after an hour or so, he seemed rather thick-headed & made a hasty retreat to the positions we started from. Consequently many who could not get along very fast were getting behind, which caused a commotion & a halt. When they had all got up, we again proceeded, but soon came under a heavy shell fire from Fritz. There was confusion & the officer gave the order to "lay out in shell-holes". Of course, a great number assembled together, & first we went this way to escape the shelling & it seemed to follow us, & back we went the opposite way. So we waited & presently the barrage lifted & we were soon in better spirits. Unfortunately we were lost, & had to send out & search the way back.

Soon we heard a signal & went that way & to our great delight found ourselves once more in our own positions. It was about mid-night & it had taken us 5 hours to cover about 1,000 yards, or a little more. Next morning, at 1 am we left our positions as arranged, & went out to "Reserve" positions at a place called Kimpton Park. Here I might say that another Brigade was to make an attack the next morning, while preparations had been made for a "bluff attack by dummy's" to draw the enemy's fire. About 4 am our artillerymen started a very heavy barrage with nearly a 1,000 guns. It was a tremendous roar they made.

Having arrived at Kimpton Park we found some little "Bivouacs" awaiting us, & after having a little soup we got down to rest with only a ground sheet to cover us. We slept until 6 am & on waking up we found ourselves in an inch or two of water. The artillery barrage became more fierce & the attack commenced. It was not long before we saw German prisoners coming back & even some Germans helping our wounded along, & we knew that the attack had been successful. During the morning we got ready & were then taken back to "Dirty Bucket Camp" by Motor lorries. Here we remained for a night or two.

One little incident I remember at this camp. We were in huts of about 20 in a hut, & were all discussing our adventures in the line during that week-end. Nearly everyone, I think all of them did, testified to their having sought God's help by prayer while under the heavy bombardment. They felt their own weakness & helplessness & realized God's power to keep & to save. Some of them had scorned the power of prayer, & disbelieved the power & love of God; but you notice when danger surrounded them, they flew to him & sought mercy & protection.

After a day or so we marched to Poparlinge. Here we were billeted in some big building, for about a week. In the town there were 2 colonial Y.M.C.A.s, a Canadian & Australian. On the Sunday morning our chaplain held his service in the Australian Y.M.C.A., & gave a really helpful & inspiring address, of the kind which makes a fellow think. What the boys want is not painted speeches & airy nothings, but something practical & what is practical but the gospel & teachings of Christ. In the evening the meeting was an open one, & a few testified to having found the Master in France. Then the Y.M.C.A. leader spoke & he was very good. The following week we marched to Proven & were living in a muddy field under canvas. However we remained here only a night or two, & on Wednesday Oct. 31st, we took Motor lorries & travelled to "Ferry Farm" bivouacs at Elverdingle. The enemy used to use long-range guns on Elverdingle. The next day Nov. 1st we start going partly up the line on "working - parties". Our job was to keep the duck-board track in good condition, on what is known as "Clarges Street". Places of interest on this track were Steenbeek, Bronbeek, Heywood, & 5 cross-roads. While at work we were often shelled. A camp having become empty at Bossinghe, we take it over, & are there about six weeks. Often we went out on night-working parties, or on early-morning parties. About Wednesday Dec. 12th, we go into the reserves dug-outs on the Yser Canal. This was the line of trenches which we occupied (sic) on July 21st of last year when our troops began their advance. We

stayed at these dug-outs for 3 days, & then on the evening of Friday 14th we go into the front-line, for 3 days. I had been made platoon runner for this time, & had plenty to do. In case the reader is unaware of the duties of a runner, I will state so here. Firstly, he has to take the messages of his officer, & secondly he has to act as a guide to the platoon's positions. Runner's and Stretcher Bearer's jobs are usually the most avoided. During our period in the line we had a fairly quiet time. Every evening I had to go to headquarters (Company) to take my officers reports. By day we had to lie quiet & make no movements, by night we could make our defences stronger, only we had to be very quiet & keep a sharp look-out for the enemy. While snow was about raids were sometimes made by British troops in "white overalls". It fell to my lot to have to guide the platoon relieving us into our positions & leading my own platoon out & back to camp. To satisfy my company headquarters, I had to go down to "Pascall Farm", the reserve headquarters, so as to be sure of the way. On Monday evening 17th, I met the relieving platoon at the appointed place, at 5 pm & took them straight to the positions & got them into trim & then led my own platoon out. The officer, sergeant, & men were dependent on me taking them safely out. I did so & got them out in record time, & first of the company, & it was after this turn in the line that I was recommended by the officer. We slept the night in these new huts, as we were. The next day, we entrained for Nordaque, a village in the St Omer district, where we were to go for a rest. It was in the afternoon, when we arrived at the station, & then there was a 7 miles march or more. Our company billeted for the night in an old cinema, & the next day we moved to a farmhouse & barns. Fortunately we were at this village for Christmas Day, & so dinner (a very good one too) was served in the Y.M.C.A. marquee. It was a splendid little village & we often paid the French people a visit for some coffee. We were allowed a pass to "Calais" in turn, for the day, & I went on Wednesday Dec 26th.

On Friday we packed & moved off at 6 am to the station at "Audruicq".

Here we entrained for Proven. We arrived at the camp in the afternoon, but this time we found huts had been put up. However we only remained here for a few days & then moved on to another camp at Elverdinghe. While at Proven, on the Sunday morning I went to the village school to a service. In the evening it was arranged for the company to be marched to a concert by the R.P.C. Jack & I got permission to be absent & attended a service at the village school.

At last we moved to Elverdinghe & were here for a day or so. A Sergeant was here "stripped" in the presence of the Battalion.

Wednesday, Jan. 2nd 1918, we go up the line again. On the way we get shelled, but get through alright, & are in reserve positions for a few days. We had a comparatively quiet time. This time I had been made a Company runner, & had plenty to do. On Friday evening Jan. 4th at about 6 pm I was sent to a platoon with orders to get an N.C.O. & 4 men to fetch their rations. While I was gone the company officer did a most ridiculous thing. He got outside of the headquarters & began using a flash-lamp. Soon after a salvo (about 5 or 6) of shells (Whizz! Bang!) came over. The first one went just over us, & as I turned around to see where the other fellows were I was hit in the right-arm just below the elbow. I felt it burn & smart, but hearing other shells coming I called to the other lads to hurry forward, but somehow they hesitated, & some ran back, consequently the shells were on them in a moment. I narrowly escaped, but two more were hit & one other very severely, who died of wounds. The next morning we got out of the pill-box & at 3 am I led the two who could walk, out to the dressing station. Having got there we were attended to & inoculated, & then taken by light railway to the 56th Field Ambulance at Elverdinghe.

After breakfast we were taken by Motor ambulance to No. 4, Casualty Clearing Station. That was Saturday morning; but on Monday we were put on Ambulance train & taken to Camiers to No. 22. General Hospital. I was

at this hospital a week, & while there I attended a service at the Scottish Church's hut, the subject being about "Jonah". From here I went to the Convalescent Camp (No. 5) at Etaples, where I was marked for "Trouville". On Wednesday, 16th I arrived at the Convalescent Depot (No. 13) stationed at Trouville. I was here for a month, & spent a most enjoyable time. After breakfast we used to march down to the beach & have games, & dancing etc. There were 3 bands, a brass, fife & Scotch pipes. The afternoons & evenings we used to have free to ourselves. Many evenings in the week there were concerts held, & on the whole they were very good. Deauville and Trouville stood one on either side of the water. Deauville was to my mind the best place, although they were such the same. On Saturday or Sunday afternoons my mate George Wood & I used to get a pass & go to Trouville. There were services held every Sunday morning & our chaplain was a very good speaker. I think he was Presbyterian. While I was there we had a communion service, which made my second & last in France. Soon the time came for me to leave & on Feb. 13th, we entrained for "Rouen", where we arrived at 10 pm. The next day we were allowed to visit Rouen so I went & had a look round. We went up on to the top of a cathedral & walked around the path, from which we had an excellent view of the town. We came down, called in a cafe & had dinner & returned to billets. At 4 pm we were aboard the train for "Etaples", & arrived there at 4 am on the 15th (Friday). Our travelling was made in goods trucks & we were glad when it ended. Arriving at Etaples we were shown to our tents. Here we were fully equipped, & I was inoculated on Sunday 17th. Then on Thursday 21st at 7.30 am we boarded the train to rejoin our Battalion, & arrived at Ficky-le-marcelic station-head. We worked here for a day on the huts.

Saturday 23rd about 9 am we marched out for the 18th Div. Wing. While at these billets we had work to do on an assault course. Our billet was an old cow-shed. While here we were called out, but it was a false alarm,

& after waiting in "Battle order" all the afternoon we were at last dismissed.

One evening there was a heavy barrage near St Quentin. Altogether we had about 10 days in these billets. Tuesday March 5th was the day when we set out to march to our Battalion. It was a long & tiring march, & when we arrived at the Details camp, we found the Battalion was in the line. In a day or so we joined them at "Liez" village. I had the job of meeting a platoon & showing them to their billet. The village had not suffered much from shell-fire, but had been blown up by the enemy. For many miles square they had killed all fruit trees from mere spite. About 700 or 1,000 yards from this village were our Battle positions. One was continuously under observation in this area, but we were practically uncollected until the offensive started.

These are briefly my experiences up till the Great Offensive on March 21st 1918, the account of the Battle I was in follows in Book 2.

Book 2.

"Being a brief account of my experiences in the first days of battle
of the great German Offensive", from March 21 - 23, 1918.

Sydney G. Cox

"Details of first 3 days battle."

March 21 - 23, 1918

March 20. - On this date, Wednesday, we were in billets in the old village of Lies, which had been blown up & destroyed by the Germans in their previous retirement. Dinner being over we go up the road to the canteen. Let the reader keep in mind that I am writing my experiences as a "company runner". At this period I was in the Sergeant's billet living with them & another runner. We were not gone long to the canteen when an order was issued to the Brigade to "stand by" ready for an attack, that is the "German Offensive", which was expected to take place within 36 hours. Orders were then issued to the companies to pack up & be ready to move at a minute's notice in "Field Service Marching Order". However that night we were allowed to sleep but not take our boots off, only our puttees, & we had to have our packs by us. The next morning 21st March we were awakened about 4 a.m. by a terrific bombardment by the enemy, & were conscious of heavy shells bursting all around our billets. Very soon all of us were awake & all was a bustle & stir. As we walked out to line up, to march to meet the foe, the bursting shells dazzled our eyes & made walking difficult. We marched to the "Battle positions" in sections & on our way we had to pass near our own artillery which was being heavily shelled. Just as one section was passing then a shell dropped almost on top of them, & when we reached the spot they were all lying on the ground face downwards, & practically all were deaf, from concussion & any who were not, soon died of wounds & shock. It was about a mile to our positions & it really was a remarkable thing how we got through the battle area through such a heavy barrage without more casualties. Let me say here for the reader's information & help, that this area before the offensive was the quietest part on the whole front of the British line. There was hardly a shell-hole to be seen, & the French had even been ploughing quite near the line. It was generally thought by us in the district that Fritz would not attempt an attack here. However I

thought one fast rather strange & it was very ugly to me, & that was his observation balloons were up everyday that week, about a dozen of them. Whether or not our people knew it, but the Germans had massed not only troops but heavy artillery, & the positions we occupied were all registered by him. Of course our authorities too, had massed artillery, but it seemed as though their positions were all known to the enemy.

We understood that they intended to keep up a 12 hours bombardment, & really it was little short of it. Having got through the barrage we arrived at Coy. Headquarters & the platoons to their various posts. Very soon a cook got through & we had breakfast. These positions we were in were only anti-tank trenches & only superficial protection, we had no concrete positions or dug-outs. At about 7 a.m. we found connections with front-line positions were cut, & they were surrounded by Fritz. Well, things became a little quieter, the enemy was launching his attack, & advancing. In our area we were holding our positions, but on our left the 3rd Army was falling back rather fast, which of course imperilled our position, & rendered us almost helpless, & Fritz was also advancing on our right.

About 11 a.m. we heard some machine-gun bullets go over our heads and cause the usual ping! ping! ping! We then knew that the enemy were drawing near, as everyone became alive & on the look-out. Very soon the enemy were spotted at about 800 yards, & were evidently advancing in small groups. They appeared very uncertain as to their position, & our Battalion soon stopped their onward march. At this period there was much running to do, & as I went on a journey to Battalion Headquarters, some bullets & shells came very near me. One runner got hit in the leg & that left us with three. The next morning at 4 o'clock, we had orders to leave our positions & retire to the "green line" behind the canal. Dismounted cavalry occupied our positions & covered our retirement, & it fell to my lot to accompany the officer round with them. By the time we got back it was time for breakfast so we made some tea, & had a little to eat. However after a little while we commenced to move on a little farther, & on the line of march we had our bayonets fixed, as we were unaware of the enemy's positions & did not know

when we might be attacked by surprise. We very soon arrived at a new position where we had to dig in. The same evening the Germans made an attack, but were repulsed & compelled to return. As we stood on the crest of the hill we saw our shells bursting over them & causing great destruction in their ranks. In return Fritz shelled with his "heavies" a wood just behind us. At the back of this wood our "cooker" was staying, & so I had to go through this wood at night & see if I could get the boys some tea. We managed to get some, & got it back to the company headquarters & to the boys. I was feeling queer, exhausted & tired out.

At 6.40 am, we received orders to send 2 platoons "over the top" to act as a strong patrol for fighting, on the left of several French divisions who were going over to attack with the object of taking a village. Guns & the French artillerymen put up a heavy barrage & likewise Fritz, so that we were soon caught in it. There was a heavy & thick fog all the time, of which the enemy took advantage. Suddenly we caught sight of the Germans advancing at about 100 yds distance. Our Colonel who was leading gave orders for us to fire, which we did. After a hot fusillade we lost sight of the enemy in the enveloping mist & fog. This made our position dangerous & so we had to fight our way back to a wood. However we fired so much that our rifles were too hot to hold almost. Our ammunition was all gone & so we had to retire to the wood & get fresh supplies & take up new positions. We got down behind anything that offered a rest to fire over.

I was lying down behind a mound, when suddenly a heavy shell fell & exploded just in front of us. Two were made shell-shock & I received a wound in the shoulder. The shrapnel tore through my gas helmet & passed across my breast tearing through my right breast pocket & sending my wallet & fountain pen to threads, & then glanced off & through my shoulder. For a moment I was almost stunned but soon got up & was on my way to the dressing-station. Stepping out of a car I got the heel of my right boot under a motor lorry wheel & had the heel of my boot torn away, but my foot

was quite alright, although the heel ached for a while. We very soon at (sic)
the C.S.S. at "Noyon". Here I stayed one night & heard enemy planes over-
head. Soon after breakfast the next morning, Sunday, March 24th, we were
on the train for Rouen. I lay in the Australian General Hospital No 1 for
a week. On the Tuesday, March 26th I had an operation & had the shoulder
muscle (the Deltoid) taken out - or at least 3 parts of it. For a fortnight
I could not move my arm.

After a week at Rouen I had a week at Trouville. On Saturday April 6th
we left the latter place & took ambulance train to Havre via Rouen, where we
arrived at 10 a.m. alongside ship on Sunday April 7th. By noon we were
aboard the "Carisbrook Castle" & left Havre about 8 pm. arriving at South-
ampton early on Monday morning the 8th. Between 8 am & 9 am we sailed on
into dock & were unloaded, & fortunately for me I was sent to Netley R.V.
Hospital.

After that you know most of my movements, so now I
conclude these few brief notes, hoping that you will
have got a little idea of how I lived in France &
Belgium, & what sort of time the boys have, ----

(passage
file 1)