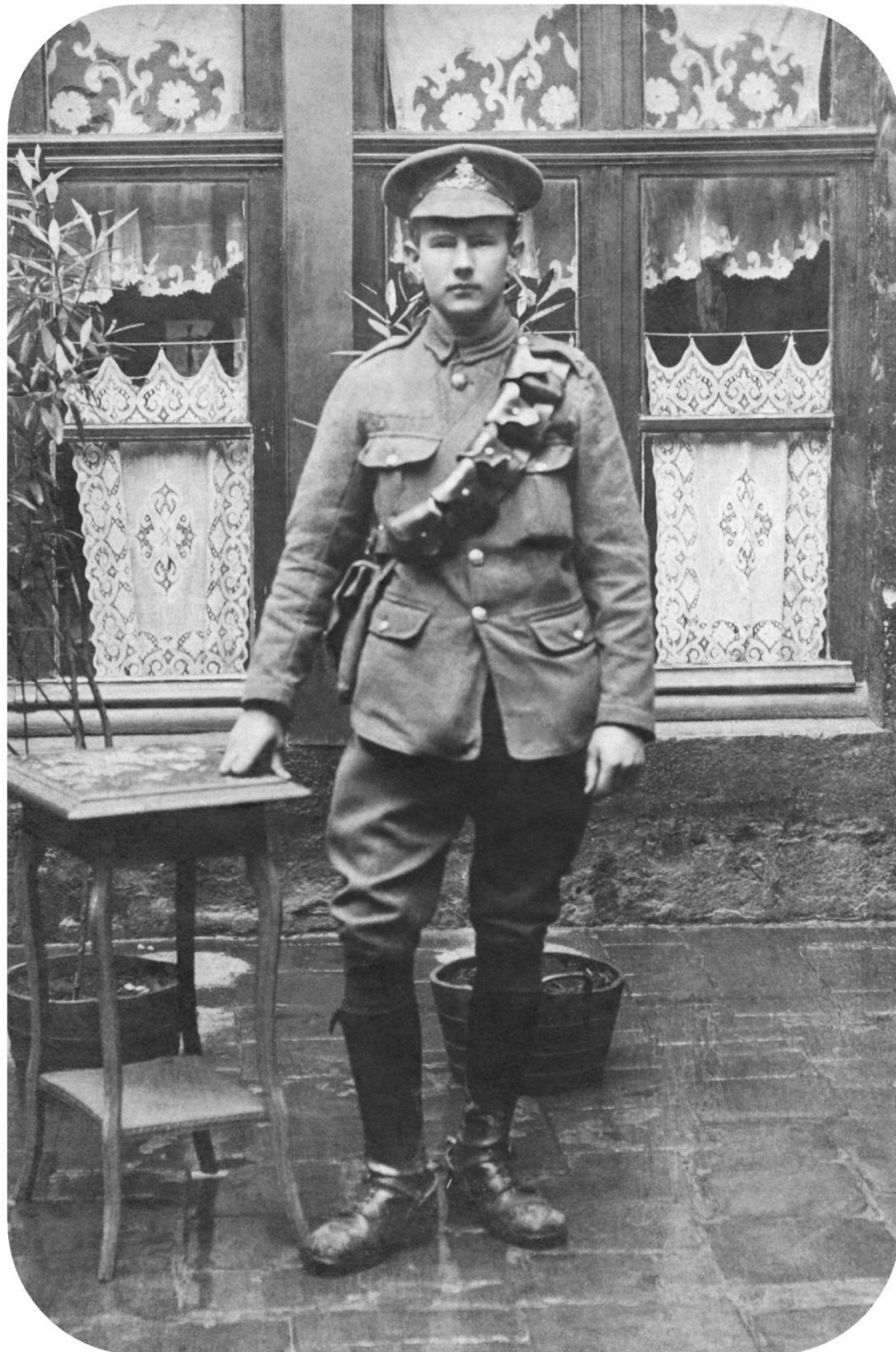


# THE MILITARY SERVICE HISTORY OF REGINALD LYNE STEPHENS

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The results of searching the archives, books and information from source documents  
supplied by Rita Brown (nee Lyne Stephens)



## Army service records

The primary and most comprehensive source of information concerning a soldier's military career is his service record. The various forms and other documents making up the record covered the entire process between enlistment and discharge. If they can be found they often provide personal, family and medical details, in addition to the facts of his training, postings to units, disciplinary record and so on. The service record is, for men who survived, the only source that is likely to mention the man's address and next of kin.

There are three collections of Great War army service records, all of which are held at the National Archives in Kew. These are the WO363 ("burnt"), WO364 and PIN26 ("pensions") collections, which originally included between them the records of all men who were discharged from the army prior to 1922. Only some 30% of soldiers papers now exist in these collections as the remainder were destroyed by fire in the War Office warehouse where they were stored in London in 1940.

Regrettably, I could find no papers that could be identified as belonging to Reginald. It is likely that they have been destroyed.

## Medals records

The medal entitlement documents are a limited source of information, as they only give bare military details from the moment the man's qualification began – which is when he first landed overseas. However, they are intact and the details of virtually all soldiers who qualified can be found. The records consist of an entry for the individual in a "roll", which is essentially a list of men who qualified for the particular medal, plus an index card which provides a reference to the rolls in which the soldier is recorded.

I have attached copies of Reginald's index card entries for the 1914-15 Star and the British War and Victory Medals.

## Gallantry and other special awards

Gallantry and other unusual awards were invariably announced in the London Gazette, the official newspaper of British Parliament. This was usually followed a day or two later by a reprint in the "Times". Searching using his name, number and regiment, I could not find any reference to any awards other than the campaign medals.

## National Roll of Honour and de Ruvigny's Roll of Honour

Both of these contemporary works were compiled on a subscription basis (in other words, the soldier or his family paid for an entry), which means that they are far from comprehensive although they do list many tens of thousands of men. Listings were often written by family members who may not have given correct details at the time of compilation and in consequence they are not considered to be completely reliable. The publishers of the larger National Roll began to compile the volumes in 1920, but had gone into liquidation by 1922 having produced only fourteen volumes.

I could find no reference to Reginald Lyne Stephens in either work.

## Operational records

All artillery brigades were obliged to maintain a war diary while they were on active service. Although they generally used a standard format and were under instructions detailing the sort of information to be recorded, they vary enormously in quality and content.

I have searched the war diary of the unit with which Reginald served but could not find him mentioned. This is not at all unusual: men below commissioned officer rank are rarely named.

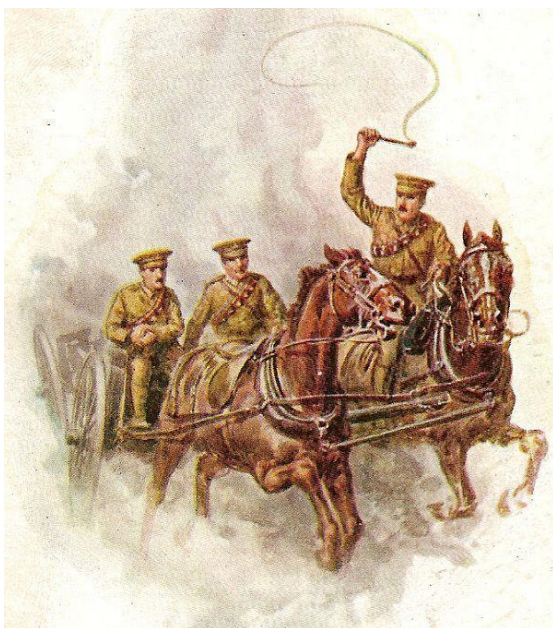
Also I have attached relevant extracts from the diary. Whilst it is the most detailed surviving record of the activities of the brigade, in common with many artillery diaries it is rather terse and in places none too informative. The diary is pencil written and faded in places.

## A reconstruction of his military service

In this section of the report I take the facts from all sources and reassemble them into a narrative. Where necessary, I have used some detective work and knowledge of how the army worked in order to recreate his story.

<b>Reginald served</b>	at home 21 Jan 1915 to 17 July 1915	178 days
	in France 18 July 1915 to 16 Oct 1916	1 year 91 days
	at home 17 Oct 1916 to 2 Feb 1917	109 days (wounded)
	in France 3 Feb 1917 to 10 Jan 1919	342 days
	at home 11 Jan 1919 to 31 Mar 1920	80 days

**From Soldiers Book** Wounded: G.S.W. Left Arm – severe. 14<sup>th</sup> October 1916.



## Enlistment and training

Reginald Lyne Stephens enlisted at Blandford on 21 January 1915. This date is consistent with his number. Reginald would have enlisted voluntarily, for conscription was two years into the future, and on terms which required him for three years or the duration of the war.

Reginald landed in France on 19 July 1915 serving, as he did throughout the war, as Gunner 65344 of the Royal Field Artillery. This was the date that 88 Brigade RFA arrived, so it would appear that he served with the same unit throughout his service overseas.

Later in the report I have given an outline of the history of 88 Brigade (which strictly ought to call LXXXVIII Brigade RFA, as field artillery brigades were identified using Roman numerals). It was created under orders for Kitchener's Second New Army, known as K2, and soon came under orders of the 19th (Western) Division. The brigade remained with the Division throughout hostilities.

21.01.15

19.07.15

## Service in France

On 23 June 1915, HM King George V inspected the Division and soon afterward orders were received to prepare to move to France. An advance party landed on 11 July and by 21 July 1915 all units had concentrated near Saint-Omer.

The Division first moved into relatively quiet trenches between Armentieres and Bethune, under the care of the Indian Corps. Here they gradually became familiarised with the conditions of trench warfare.

The 19th (Western) Division served in the Festubert and Givenchy sectors, and then took part in the Battle of Loos in September 1915.

They remained in this area until May 1916, the battalion occupying the line variously at Festubert, Gorre, and Richebourg.

The 19th (Western) Division was in reserve at the opening of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, but was moved in to relieve the devastated 34<sup>th</sup> Division facing La Boisselle soon afterwards. Over the next few days, it had a real baptism of fire in the dogged effort to capture the village, which it finally achieved. By 5<sup>th</sup> July it had more than 3,500 casualties. A memorial to the Division is there today.

It later fought at High Wood on 22nd/23rd July and returned for the battle of Ancre in November 1916.

11.07.15

21.07.15

Sep 1915

May 1916

Jul 1916

23.07.16



## 19 (WESTERN) DIVISION MEMORIAL, LA BOISSELLE

*The memorial is located just outside the church in the centre of the village of La Boisselle.*

It was in action again as the fight moved on towards Pozieres, and after a period of rest and refit near Bailleul in Flanders, moved back to the Somme in October 1916 and took part in operations in the Ancre valley, notably at Stuff Trench near Thiepval (after Reginald had left).

On 2 October the brigade came out of action at Ypres and moved to billets at Godewaersvelde, a hamlet well to the west that often proved beyond the ability of British troops to pronounce; they called it "Gert (or Gertie) wears velvet".

After a rest of four days they entrained there, alighted at Vauchelles and marched to temporary billets at Vauchelles. This was in the area behind the Somme battlefield. On 7 October the brigade moved up to the wagon lines at St Leger and then next day the batteries took up positions. (*Not to be confused with the village of the same name near the Hindenburg Line in the arras area, St Leger is west of Hebuterne on the Somme and has a full name of St Leger-les-Authie.*)

The war diary mentions battery positions in squares K.17.b and K.17.d of the Hebuterne trench map. These are locations a few hundred yards directly east of the village, in a recently captured enemy front line.

On 12 October the batteries commenced firing to cut the barbed wire defences that ran in front of the next German trench complex, preparatory to an attack. This operation continued until the evening of 16 October when the brigade was relieved by 170 Brigade RFA and moved to the area between Albert and Aveluy. During such operations, enemy artillery fire aimed at neutralising the British guns was often heavy. The war diary on this occasion makes no reference to any retaliatory fire but this must be a likely cause of

Sep 1916

Oct 1916

02.10.16

01.10.16

12.10.16

16.10.16

Reginald's wound. He was evacuated and judging by his own Small Book left France for hospital in England on 16 October.

Service records show that Reginald was wounded 14<sup>th</sup> October 1916, and returned to Blighty on October 16<sup>th</sup>. However he records the date of wounding as 6<sup>th</sup> October.

The brigade war diary provides useful contextual information but is not specific enough to allow us to confirm the date on which this happened. It does however seem that 6 October (the date in Reginald's pocket book) makes it unlikely that Reginald was wounded in battle – the most likely date for battle wounds being 14<sup>th</sup> October.

However Reginald was a batman and as such was often running errands for the Major – from the taking of messages to important positions to the buying groceries. It must be remembered that out of battle there was often artillery fire, often machine gun fire at important points were the Timmy awes exposed and always snipers at the ready.

Reginald returned to France on 3 February 1917. The evidence suggests that he returned to 88 Brigade RFA and served with it until the end of the war.

After another move and some weeks in Flanders, the Division was among those that made the initial assault in the highly successful Battle of Messines Ridge on 7 June 1917 and succeeding days. The Division captured Bois Quarante and moved forward to Oosttaverne, where it resisted a counter attack. A second Divisional memorial is located here.

16.10.16

14.10.16

06.10.16

03.02.17

07.06.17



### The 19th Division memorial at Oosttaverne crossroads

*Oosttaverne Wood cemetery is adjacent to the memorial to the 19th (Western or 'Butterfly') Division. The cemetery was established in June 1917 during the Messines battle. Following the war many surrounding graves were moved into Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery, Wijtschate.*



The Divisional memorial is sited at the crossroads which the division successfully reached within five hours of the start of the attack, which included the taking of the village of Oostaverne nearby.

The 19th (Western) "Butterfly" Division memorial is located nearby Wytschaete. It shows the butterfly emblem of the Division at the top of the cross and commemorates the division's greatest achievement of the First World War.

The 19th Division Memorial has an identical memorial in design at la Boisselle on the Somme.



## 19th Western Division Memorial

*The 19th (Western) Division memorial - the 'Butterfly' division, a name derived from the divisional emblem - is located nearby Wytschaete. It commemorates perhaps the division's greatest achievement of the First World War.*

*With the opening of the Battle of Messines on 7 June 1917 the 19th Division was among the first to advance in the wake of the explosion of 19 mines which signified the start of the attack at 3.10am. The memorial is sited at the crossroads which the division successfully reached within five hours of the start of the attack, which included the taking of the village of Oosttaverne nearby.*

*During the attack 19th Division lost 51 officers and some 1,358 other ranks. In their turn they captured 1,253 German prisoners.*

*The same site saw further action by 19th Division in April 1918 during the Battle of Lys.*



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The same site saw further action by 19th Division in April 1918 during the Battle of Lys.

On 31 July 1917 the British launched a large offensive, officially called the Third Battle of Ypres but more often known as Passchendaele. The 19<sup>th</sup> (Western) Division attacked on the first day, virtually from where they had ended the Messines action some weeks before. The Loyal North Lancashires captured Forret Farm near Hollebeke, as the Division met its initial objectives.

The Division came out of the line on 8 August, and had a period to rest, receive replacement drafts and carry out training, before it took part in another stage of the offensive, in the Battle of the Menin Road on 20 September 1917. On this occasion the assaulting units attacked from Hollebeke – the line captured in late July had not been advanced until now – and achieved their objectives despite heavy casualties.

The Division took part in further operations in the Ypres area in October and November 1917 as the weather gradually made conditions impossible. 1918 saw the Division engaged in almost continuous action.

On 21 March 1918, the German army opened a huge offensive against the British Third and Fifth Armies. This was known to them as Operation Michael, or due to its war-winning aims

07.06.17

31.07.17

08.08.17

20.09.17

Oct 1917

Nov  
1917

21.03.18



and presence of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the “Kaiserschlacht”: the Kaiser’s Battle. At the time, 19th (Western) Division was under command of Third Army.

88 Brigade RFA was located in the north east corner of Havrincourt Wood, facing Cambrai, when the attack began. The diary records unemotionally that “our battery receives attention with guns of all calibres and gas shells”. In fact, it came under the heaviest bombardment of the war and one of the heaviest in history. The battery positions were simply deluged with poison gas and high explosive shellfire. Many batteries were out of action when the enemy infantry attacked through dense fog a few hours later.

When the enemy launched an overwhelming offensive from Saint Quentin, across the Somme front to Arras on 21 March 1918, the units of the Division were somewhat scattered and in reserve. It was ordered up to support the 51st (Highland) Division, which was heavily engaged in the Cambrai area. The advancing units deployed around Doignies and Beaumetz, and most severe fighting took place over the next few days. A fighting withdrawal was made, and by 26 March the Division was holding on, on the old 1916 battlefield, as luck would have it back near Hebuterne. After more tense days, the Division was finally relieved and moved to Second Army area in Flanders. It had lost just over 4,000 men in ten days bitter action.

In the afternoon, 88 Brigade withdrew its guns to positions north east of Bertincourt – and over the next few days continued to withdraw over a distance of many miles. It was in the exhaustion of this retreat that Major Amy was wounded on 27 March, by which time the brigade was, by coincidence, back at Hebuterne.

Unfortunately, the second phase of the enemy offensive opened on 9 April in Flanders, where many of the shattered Division had recently arrived. When this new attack broke, the Brigades of the Division were in the area of Ploegsteert - Messines, where they fought a creditable defence, but at the loss of a further 4,500 men. The Divisional memorial at Oosttaverne remembers not only the success of June 1917, but this terrible struggle too.

In early May 1918, five of the worst damaged Divisions – now being brought to strength with barely trained conscripts – were moved well away from the British zone, into the defences of the French Army in the valley of the River Aisne. 19th (Western) Division was one of those selected, and duly arrived at St Germain la Ville, 7 miles south east of Chalons. It was fortunate not to have been placed in the front line, for on 27 May the enemy struck for the third time, in this very area. Three British Divisions were virtually destroyed – as were several French ones. The Division once again had to fight a withdrawal, back to and over the River Marne. By mid June, it had lost another 3,500 men, and was in such a damaged state that it had to be entirely withdrawn and rebuilt.

It was not until October 1918, by which time the turn had turned in the Allies favour, that the Division was once again seriously engaged, when it assisted the crossing of the River Selle near St Python and Solesmes. From there, it was continually engaged as the army pushed into Valenciennes and Jenlain.

21.03.18

26.03.18

27.03.18

09.04.18

May  
1918

27.05.18

Oct  
1918

## After discharge

After returning to England on 11 January 1919, Reginald was demobilised at No 1 Dispersal Unit at Thetford on 27 January 1919. His method of discharge was by being transferred to Class Z Army Reserve. This was the standard route out of military service for wartime volunteers and conscripts to the regular army. It meant that the soldier could return to civilian life but subject to being recalled if required, for twelve months after discharge. In the event, no Class Z men were recalled and the Class was abolished on 31 March 1920.

11.01.19

27.01.19

31.03.20

Reginald's campaign medals were sent to him automatically after the war. It was not necessary to claim them. The British War and Victory Medals were usually dispatched in 1921. They were to recognise that the soldier had left his native shore and entered a theatre of war, respectively. The 1914-15 Star came earlier, being posted to him in 1919.

## Suggestions for further research

Local press in Bury St Edmunds Record Office: Local newspapers can be a goldmine of information and it would be worth searching especially for mentions of Reginald's hospitalisation, of which there will be no other form of record.



RFA on horseback

## **Supporting information (88th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (LXXXVIII Brigade RFA)**

On 5 August 1914, the day that he took over as Minister for War, Field Marshal Earl Kitchener of Khartoum issued orders for the expansion of the Army. He believed that the war would not be “over by Christmas” as the popular press (in both Great Britain and Germany) put it. He had been opposed to the creation of the Territorial Force, and did not plan to base the expanded army upon it. Instead, he determined to raise a new army, composed of volunteers.

Each man would sign up for three years or the duration, whichever was shorter, and would agree to being sent to serve anywhere. Next day, Parliament accordingly sanctioned an increase of 500,000 men of all ranks in the Regular Army.

“Your King and Country need you - a call to arms” was published on 11 August 1914, explaining the new conditions of service and calling for 100,000 men to enlist. This figure was achieved within two weeks. Army Order 324, dated 21 August, specified that six new Divisions would be created from these men, collectively to be called Kitchener's Army or K1. It detailed how the new infantry battalions would be given numbers consecutive to the existing battalions of their regiment, but with the addition of the word “Service” after the unit number. Further orders were given to raise subsequent New Armies, known as K2, K3, K4, etc.

88 Brigade RFA was one of four new artillery units to be placed under command of the newly formed 57th Brigade in 19th (Western) Division – a K2 formation that which soon adopted the Butterfly as its Divisional symbol and was often known to the soldiers as the Butterfly Division. The Division was administered by the Army's Western Command, hence that reference in its title. By late September 1914, all units that comprised the Division had been assembled in the area of Bulford on Salisbury Plain. Final training for active service was undertaken at Tidworth and supplies of proper equipment were finally received.

On 23 June 1915, HM King George V inspected the Division and soon afterward orders were received to prepare to move to France. An advance party landed on 11 July and by 21 July all units had concentrated near Saint-Omer.

## **The Royal Field Artillery**

A Division of the British Army of 1914 had a complement of four artillery brigades, each of which included an ammunition column. The brigade was the basic tactical unit of the field artillery of the British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918. It was composed of a Brigade Headquarters and a number of batteries of guns or howitzers. At full establishment, a brigade of 18-pounder field guns consisted of 795 men, of whom 23 were officers. During the war, two brigades were taken from each Division to form a more mobile force that could be concentrated where needed, and the brigade ammunition columns merged into Divisional ones.

## **Brigade HQ**

The Brigade was usually commanded by an officer with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Brigade HQ also had two other officers: a Captain or Lieutenant filled the role of Adjutant (in charge of administration); similarly a Captain or Lieutenant was the Orderly Officer

(responsible for stores and transport); an officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps was attached, as was an officer of the Veterinary Corps.

Brigade HQ also included a Sergeant Major plus two Corporals, two Bombardiers, nine Drivers, 7 Gunners, a Clerk, and a Trumpeter. These filled roles as signallers, telephonists and assisted with range-taking duties.

A Corporal and 3 Privates of the Royal Army Medical Corps were attached for water duties; 8 Gunners acted as Officers Batmen (personal servants), and 2 as Orderlies for the Medical Officer.

The Brigade HQ was in command of 3 Batteries and an Ammunition Column.

## Batteries

Usually lettered A to C, each of the Batteries numbered 198 heads at full establishment. Each was commanded by a Major or Captain, with a Captain as Second-in-Command, and 3 Lieutenants or Second Lieutenants in charge of 2- gun sections.

Battery establishment also included a Battery Sergeant-Major, a Battery Quartermaster Sergeant, a Farrier-Sergeant, 4 Shoeing Smiths (of which 1 would be a Corporal), 2 Saddlers, 2 Wheelers, 2 Trumpeters, 7 Sergeants, 7 Corporals, 11 Bombardiers, 75 Gunners, 70 Drivers and 10 Gunners acting as Batmen. The farriers would generally stay and work at the battery horse and wagon lines, which were usually about half a mile or so behind the gun positions.

If asked, after his name, rank and number, a man might refer to himself as being in Number 3 Section, B Battery, the 95th Artillery Brigade. A gunner would also know the infantry units his Brigade supported, and certainly the Division that the Brigade was attached to.

## Brigade Ammunition Column

The Ammunition Column numbered 158 heads. Commanded by a Captain, with 3 Lieutenants or Second Lieutenants, the job of the BAC was to bring ammunition and other supplies to the Battery positions from the Divisional dumps. It was divided into two sections. BAC establishment also included a Battery Sergeant-Major, a Battery Quartermaster Sergeant, a Farrier- Sergeant, 4 Shoeing Smiths (of which 1 would be a Corporal), 2 Saddlers, 2 Wheelers, a Trumpeter, 4 Sergeants, 5 Corporals, 5 Bombardiers, 30 Gunners, 96 Drivers and 3 Gunners acting as Batmen. Brigade Ammunition Columns disappeared in May 1916, when they were reorganised into Divisional Ammunition Columns. This took place earlier in Kitchener Divisions.



RFA on horseback

## Also in the Brigade

Included in the figures shown above, were 34 Acting Bombardiers (one stripe; the equivalent of a Lance-Corporal). They were the MO's orderly, plus 9 in each Battery, and 8 in the BAC.

Each brigade had a detachment at its Base Depot, which did not take the field when the brigade was on active service. The Base Detachment consisted – in theory - of a subaltern, 2 Sergeants, 5 Drivers and 41 Gunners to form a first reinforcement (to make good brigade casualties or other losses); 4 Storemen, and a Sergeant-Clerk (who was on the headcount of the Records Section of the Adjutant-General's Office).

## Armaments and Equipment

At the outbreak of war, field gun batteries of the Regular Army had 6 guns, and those of the Territorial Force 4 guns. The standard weapons, which did not alter during the war, were the 18-lbr field gun, and the 4.5-inch howitzer.

Brigade Transport consisted of 13 riding and 43 draught and packhorses. They provided the power for drawing the six ammunition carts, two water carts, three General Service Wagons (for tools and machine guns), and the MO's Maltese Cart. The Signallers had 9 bicycles. (Note: the Divisional Train also provided four more two-horsed GS Wagons for each Battalion.

Only 5 men in Brigade HQ, 36 in each battery and all the Gunners and Drivers in the BAC carried a rifle. Bayonets were not issued. All NCOs and men wore a bandolier.

Other brigade equipment, over and above that carried by the man, included 126 shovels, 18 spades, 72 pickaxes, 27 felling axes, 72 billhooks, 54 hand saws, 46 reaping hooks and a crowbar. There was also a plethora of minor stores and spares.

The brigade also carried a certain amount of ammunition, although this was backed up by the echelons of Transport at Divisional and Lines of Communication levels.

## Changes during the war

At the outbreak of the war, field gun batteries of the Regular Army had 6 guns, and those of the Territorial Force 4 guns. The latter also became the norm in the New Armies. A Division had 3 Field Brigades and 1 Howitzer Brigade. The Howitzer Brigades at Divisional level were broken up during May 1916, and the sections allocated to join the field gun Brigades, usually of the same Division. In January 1917, one of each Division's three Brigades was taken under Army control. Brigade Ammunition Columns disappeared in May 1916, when they were reorganised into Divisional Ammunition Columns.

The Great War has often been called the gunner's war. "The artillery conquers and the infantry occupies," remarked one French general. That was too simplistic, of course, as infantry tactics developed throughout the war, but the artillery barrage was the key to victory or defeat.

In 1914 and 1915, artillery proved it was the great killer. For those caught in the open, shrapnel and high explosive shells wreaked havoc. Thousands were left rotting on the

battlefields. However, artillery guns were vulnerable to small arms fire, and they could be driven away from the front. But the guns were soon firing indirectly from hidden positions several kilometers to the rear, still causing terrible damage. Soldiers were forced to find safety in trenches, digging beneath the ground to escape the murderous fire.

As trenches were strengthened with barbed wire, deep dugouts, and machine -guns, an enormous weight of fire was needed to smash the enemy defences and support the infantry. But there were not always enough shells in the early years to feed the guns. And so the infantry were killed in the tens of thousands as they attacked undamaged enemy trenches in frontal assaults. As the war lengthened, artillerymen received nearly unlimited supplies of shells through the enormous production of munitions factories. New tactics were also developed to improve the accuracy of the guns.

Artillery shells contained high explosives, shrapnel, and, later in the war, poison gas and smoke. Both the high explosive and shrapnel shells were timed to detonate in the air above a target. High explosive shells blasted holes in the trenches and the concussion alone could kill, as lungs collapsed under the force of the explosion. Shrapnel shells were equally deadly, consisting of more than 300 rounded metal balls that exploded downward in a cone-shaped rain of whirling metal. As well, the casing of the shell was designed to explode outward, creating jagged, uneven shards of steel that tore through flesh.

By 1916, commanders believed that massive artillery shoots, involving hundreds of thousands of shells, would annihilate the enemy defenders. This would allow the infantry to punch a hole through enemy lines and restore mobility on the Western Front.

However, it was often hard to hit, and then destroy, the narrow and well-fortified trenches. The problem also lay in the shell fuses. Earlier types were not sensitive enough to explode on contact, especially with shells tasked to clear barbed wire. As a result, many of the shells exploded in the ground, killing very few of the enemy, leaving the infantry to fight their way through defences-in-depth. By the end of 1916, newer, sensitive fuses that exploded on the slightest contact harnessed the destructive power of the artillery and, equally important to the infantry, cleared barbed wire from in front of enemy trenches.

Tactics again changed during the later phases of the bloody battles of the Somme in the last half of 1916. The gunners would never be able to destroy all of the German defences, and even one machine -gunner could kill hundreds of attacking infantry. Instead, the artillery sought to suppress enemy fire through a “creeping barrage,” and give their own attacking infantry enough time to cross the killing zone of *No Man’s Land*.

Gunners fired their shells to create a “creeping” wall of fire that slowly moved forward over the enemy lines at fixed intervals: 50 yards (46 m) every couple of minutes, less for muddy ground, more for open warfare. In effect, it was a screen of fire and explosives. As this moving wall of shrapnel and high explosives chewed up the ground in its path, the infantry were told to “lean into the barrage” and stay as close as possible. Although friendly fire was expected and occurred, the casualties would still be lighter than if the creeping barrage moved off and allowed German machine -gunners, waiting in the safety of deep dugouts, to get to the top of their trenches before the infantry crossed No Man’s Land.

At the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917, the gunners had perfected the creeping barrage.

Yet enemy gunners still took a fearful toll as they laid down their own counter-barrages to catch the follow-on waves of infantry. The enemy guns had to be stopped, or slowed, but it was exceedingly difficult to identify, target, and destroy camouflaged guns several kilometers away.

Accurate intelligence was essential, and new and refined forms of science aided the gunners. Aerial reconnaissance from the Royal Flying Corps (later Royal Air Force) was of great assistance as airmen photographed the front from great heights. Later in the war, observation aircraft circled the battlefield, passing real-time information to the gunners through letter drops and primitive wireless radio.

As the CCBO developed after April 1917, this information-gathering and target-selection became more sophisticated, with new technology, like sound-ranging and flash-spotting, assisting gunners to find and destroy enemy targets.

Flash-spotting involved the coordination of observers. At least three posts were needed, usually spread out along several kilometers. When an enemy gun position was spotted by the revealing flash as the shell left the barrel, the observers were telephoned by headquarters to turn their attention to that spot. After studying the flash of the gun, the observers would hit a key that was connected to a lamp at headquarters. From the observers' bearings, and by triangulating their estimates, enemy guns could be located with high precision.

Sound-ranging worked on a similar principle. Listeners sat two kilometres behind the line with their microphones. Additional posts were manned well ahead of these positions. As long as there was not more than one shell per second being fired, on hearing the crash of an enemy gun, the forward listening post pressed a key that started an oscillograph, an instrument that recorded on film the sound of the shell in flight as it reached each microphone in turn. The time-intervals between the microphones allowed the CCBO to analyse the information and, if conditions were optimal, pinpoint enemy guns to within twenty-five 25 yards (23 m). All available counter-battery guns would be aimed on that spot to deliver a destructive shoot of 50-100 shells. Chemical shells were also used to kill or force the enemy gunners to wear debilitating respirators that severely affected the rate of fire.

In the last year of the war, artillery had perfected the creeping barrage and was steadily improving its counter-battery work. Further tactical refinement allowed gunners to fire more complicated barrages, like a box barrage. The box barrages set up a wall of fire and explosives around an enemy position --- usually a trench --- which effectively isolated it from reinforcements. It allowed assaulting infantrymen to capture and consolidate a position without fear of immediate counterattack.

The First World War was indeed a gunner's war.



## The 19th (Western) Division

## A New Army Division

### Summary history of the division

A Division of K2 established by Westrn Command, the units were assembled around Bulford during September 1914. Divisional training was completed near Tidworth, from March 1915, and the Butterfly crossed to France 11th-21st July 1915. It remained on the Western Front throughout the war.

The Battle of Loos

The Battle of Albert (first phase of the Battle of the Somme 1916)

In the latter action, the Division captured La Boisselle.

The Battle of Pozieres (third phase of the Battle of the Somme 1916)

The Battle of the Ancre Heights (ninth phase of the Battle of the Somme 1916)

The Battle of the Ancre (tenth phase of the Battle of the Somme 1916)

Operations on the Ancre

The Battle of Messines

The Battle of the Menin Road (third phase of the Third Battle of Ypres)

The Battle of the Polygon Wood (fourth phase of the Third Battle of Ypres)

The Battle of Broodseinde (fifth phase of the Third Battle of Ypres)

The Battle of Poelcapelle (sixth phase of the Third Battle of Ypres)

The First Battle of Passchendaele (seventh phase of the Third Battle of Ypres)

The Second Battle of Passchendaele (eighth phase of the Third Battle of Ypres)

The Battle of St Quentin (first phase of the First Battles of the Somme 1918)

The First Battle of Bapaume (second phase of the First Battles of the Somme 1918)

The Battle of Messines, 1918 (second phase of the Battles of the Lys)

The Battle of Bailleul (fourth phase of the Battles of the Lys)

The First Battle of Kemmel (fifth phase of the Battles of the Lys)

The Battle of the Aisne 1918

The Advance in Flanders

The Battle of the Selle

The Battle of Valenciennes

The Battle of the Sambre

The Passage of the Grand Honelle

In total, the Division suffered more than **39,000** casualties during the Great War. Demobilisation was completed by 18th March 1919.



## Order of Battle

### 56th Brigade

7th (Service) Bn , the King's Own (joined September 1914, disbanded February 1918)  
4th (Extra Reserve) Bn, the King's (Liverpool) (joined December 1915 - also att to 58th Brigade, left February 1916)  
7th (Service) Bn, the East Lancashire (joined September 1914, disbanded February 1918)  
7th (Service) Bn, the South Lancashire (joined September 1914, disbanded February 1918)  
7th (Service) Bn, the Loyal North Lancs (joined September 1914, disbanded February 1918)  
1/4th Bn, the KSLI (joined February 1918)  
8th (Service) Bn, the North Staffords (joined February 1918)  
56th Brigade Machine Gun Company (joined 14 February 1916, although a provisional Company existed September - December 1915, moved into 19 MGBn 14 February 1918)  
56th Trench Mortar Battery (joined 17 June 1916; broken up 5 February 1918, reconstructed 6 March 1918)

### 57th Brigade

10th (Service) Bn , the Royal Warwicks (joined September 1914)  
8th (Service) Bn, the Gloucesters (joined September 1914)  
3rd Bn, the Worcesters (joined June 1918)  
10th (Service) Bn, the Worcesters (joined September 1914, left as a cadre June 1918)  
8th (Service) Bn, the North Staffords (joined September 1914, left February 1918)  
57th Brigade Machine Gun Company (joined 14 February 1916, , moved into 19 MGBn 14 February 1918)  
57th Trench Mortar Battery (joined 15 June 1916)

### 58th Brigade

9th (Service) Bn, the Cheshires (joined September 1914)  
9th (Service) Bn, the Royal Welsh Fusiliers (joined September 1914)  
5th (Service) Bn, the South Wales Borderers (joined September 1914, left January 1915)  
9th (Service) Bn, the Welsh (joined September 1914)  
2nd Bn, the Wiltshires (joined May 1918)  
6th (Service) Bn, the Wiltshires (joined December 1915, left as a cadre June 1918)  
58th Brigade Machine Gun Company (joined 14 February 1916, , moved into 19 MGBn 14 February 1918)  
58th Trench Mortar Battery (joined 15 June 1916)

### Divisional Troops

5th (Service) Bn (Pioneers), the South Wales Borderers (joined January 1915)  
6th (Service) Bn, the Wiltshires (joined August 1914, left December 1915)  
22nd (Service) Bn (3rd County Pioneers), the Durham Light Infantry (joined June 1916, left July 1916)  
246th Machine Gun Company (joined 19 July 1917, moved into 19 MGBn 24 February 1918)  
No 19 Machine Gun Battalion (created 14 February 1918)  
No 13 Motor Machine Gun Battery (attached 14 July 1915 - 7 March 1916)

### Divisional Mounted Troops

C Squadron , the 1/1st Yorkshire Dragoons (joined 26 June 1915, left 21 April 1916)  
19th Divisional Cyclist Company (formed 19 November 1914, left 21 April 1916)

**Divisional Artillery**

LXXXVI Brigade, RFA (became Army Brigade, 23 January 1917)

LXXXVII Brigade, RFA

LXXXVIII Brigade, RFA

LXXXIX (H) Brigade, RFA (broken up 8-9 September 1916)

19th Heavy Battery, RGA (a Battery of 4 60-lbr guns raised with the Division but moved to XXI Heavy Artillery Brigade on formation)

19th Divisional Ammunition Column

W.19 Heavy Trench Mortar Battery RFA (joined in May 1916, disbanded 18 February 1918)

X.19, Y.19 and Z.19 Medium Mortar Batteries RFA (joined by May 1916; on 18 February 1918, Z broken up and batteries reorganised to have 6 x 6-inch weapons each)

**Engineer Units**

81st Field Company (joined Sep 1914)

82nd Field Company (joined Sep 1914)

94th Field Company (joined Jan 15)

19th Divisional Signal Company

**Field Ambulances**

57th Field Ambulance (joined Jun 1915)

58th Field Ambulance (joined Jun 1915)

59th Field Ambulance (joined Jun 1915)

**Other**

19th Divisional Train ASC (154, 155, 156 and 157 Coys ASC joined 3 November 1914)

220th Divisional Employment Company (joined 19 July 1917)

31st Mobile Veterinary Section

36th Sanitary Section (left 9 July 1917, for V Corps)

19th Divisional Motor Ambulance Workshop (on 6 April 1916, absorbed by Divisional Train)

**Divisional command**

Lieut.-Gen. Sir C.Fasken (25/9/1914)

Maj-Gen. G. Bridges (13/12/1915)

Br-Gen. W. Monkhouse (Acting, 6/4/1917)

Maj-Gen. Hon. A. Montagu - Stuart - Wortley (Temp, 7/4/917)

Maj-Gen. C. Shute (Temp, 24/5/1917)

Maj-Gen. G. Bridges (19/6/1917, wounded)

Br-Gen. W. Monkhouse (Acting, 20/9/1917)

Maj-Gen. G.Jeffreys (22/9/1917)

*To be compared to the list on pages 27 and 28 for cross reference.*

The Royal Army Medical Corps was the unit providing the non-combatants who staffed the various stages of the chain that handled the evacuation and treatment of a casualty. They were supplemented by many volunteers of the Red Cross, St John's Ambulance, Voluntary Aid Detachments, and other groups.

**Field Ambulances** The Field Ambulance attached to the infantry or cavalry Brigade provided one or more Advanced Dressing Stations in reasonable proximity of the front lines. Field Ambulances moved with their Division.

**Casualty Clearing Stations** The Casualty Clearing Station was the next stop on the casualty evacuation chain after the Field Ambulance. It was not part of the Divisional structure, but was a lines of communication unit.

### **Field Ambulance, Hospitals and Casualty Clearing Stations.**

**General and Stationary Hospitals on the Western Front** The hospitals were the last stop in France on the casualty evacuation chain after the Casualty Clearing Stations. The Stationary and General Hospitals were part of the casualty evacuation chain, on the lines of communication. Hospitals were located on or near railway lines to facilitate movement of casualties from the CCS's and on to the ports. Most of the hospitals moved rarely until the larger movements of the armies in 1918. Some hospitals moved into the Rhine bridgehead in Germany and many were operating in France well into 1919. Some hospitals were operated by a mix of RAMC and voluntary organisations, most notably the British Red Cross.

The establishment of a Field Ambulance



In 1914, each infantry Division had 3 Field Ambulances, each of which was divided into 3 Sections. In turn, those Sections had Stretcher Bearer and Tented subsections. The Field Ambulance was composed of 10 officers and 224 men, as shown below. In no way should modern readers confuse this with our current-day usage of the word Ambulance (meaning the vehicle).

#### **A Section**

#### **65 in total**

- Lieutenant-Colonel, in command of the Ambulance and A Section
- Captain or Lieutenant in command of Stretcher Bearer subsection
- 1 Sergeant and 1 Corporal
- 1 Bugler
- 3 Privates (wagon orderlies) and 36 Privates (bearers)
- Captain or Lieutenant in command of Tent subsection
- Quartermaster, Sergeant-Major, 2 Sergeants, 2 Corporals
- 15 Privates (including a cook, a washerman and 2 orderlies)



This is "A Section" of 129 Field Ambulance 'somewhere in Flanders'.

- B and C Sections**
- Captain or Lieutenant in command of Stretcher Bearer subsection
  - 1 Sergeant and 1 Corporal
- 128 in total**
- 1 Bugler
  - 2 Privates (wagon orderlies) and 36 Privates (bearers)
  - Major, Captain or Lieutenant in command of Tent subsection
  - Quartermaster, Sergeant-Major, 4 Sergeants, 2 Corporals
  - 13 Privates (including a cook, a washerman and 2 orderlies)
- Attached**
- A Section also had a Sergeant, 10 Drivers and 4 officers batmen attached from the ASC. B and C Sections each had a Sergeant, 9 Drivers and 3 batmen attached. An ASC driver for the cooks wagon was also attached.

As with all other units, the Field Ambulances relied heavily on horses for transport, and had an establishment of 14 riding and 52 draught and pack horses. They worked the 23 wagons, 3 water carts, 3 forage carts, 6 GS wagons, 10 ambulance wagons, and the cooks wagon. The Ambulance also had a single bicycle.

Neither officers or men carried weapons or ammunition.

By the end of 1914, each unit also included 7 motor ambulances. A workshop to maintain them was added to the Division, although in 1916 it was absorbed in the Supply Column.

A Sanitary Section (consisting of a Lieutenant or Second-Lieutenant, 2 Sergeants, 2 Corporals, 20 Privates and 1 batman) was added to the Division in early 1915. It's job was to maintain as far as possible clean water supplies, cooking facilities and billets. The Sanitary Sections came under Corps or Army control from March 1917 onwards.

## The tasks undertaken by men of the Field Ambulance

Thanks to the war diary of No 56 Field Ambulance RAMC, we have an insight into the tasks undertaken by the men of the Ambulance. On 12 January 1916, when at Daours, the men were organised into the following parties:

8 **wards**, in two blocks of 4 each with a Sergeant Wardmaster and Corporal Assistant Wardmaster for each block.

33 men acting as nursing orderlies or general duty orderlies, including 7 men on night shift, in the wards.

5 men on **pack store** duties.

6 on rifle and kit **cleaning**.

3 men on hospital **fatigues**.

3 men on patients **bath house** duties.

6 men on RAMC men's **cookhouse** and 3 on mens dining hall.

5 on **patient's cookhouse**, 4 on canteen, 3 on patients dining room.

3 on **billet cleaning**.

4 in the **dispensary**.

6 in the **wash house**.

7 on **sanitary squad**.

4 at **bathing establishment**.

9 in **drying room**.

4 in **quartermaster's stores**.

2 white washers.

1 in the ablution room.

1 fumigator.

1 in the cleaning yard.

2 bootmakers.

1 horsed ambulance driver.

1 tailor.

1 barber.

2 men at the ASC Refilling Point.

3 water cart orderlies.

5 loaders.

1 sick officer's cook and 1 orderly, same.

5 permanent **police squad**.

2 in sergeant's mess.

8 in officer's mess.

11 men not detailed.

## The role of the Field Ambulance

A chain of medical establishments stretching from the front-line positions back to hospitals in the United Kingdom, India and elsewhere was established wherever the British Army was deployed. Depending on the nature of the wound or sickness, a man requiring treatment may have by-passed some of the steps in the chain. The Field Ambulance played a very critical role, as it received men soon after they had received their wound. If it was possible, a wounded man would first be treated at a Regimental Aid Post, a small and often

temporary position near or in the front lines. Here a Medical Officer of the RAMC, with 2 RAMC orderlies and a number of stretcher bearers (who were not RAMC men, but from units of the Division) would carry out first-aid. This might be sufficient treatment to allow the man to carry on (in the event of superficial cuts for example), or in other cases be something to enable him to pass to the next stage, the Field Ambulance.

The Field Ambulance would attempt to treat the man, or again just do enough to ensure he could be passed back to the next point, the Casualty Clearing Station (CCS). The theoretical capacity of the Field Ambulance was 150 casualties, but in battle many would simply be overwhelmed by numbers. The Ambulance was responsible for a number of points along the evacuation chain for the casualty, from the Bearer Relay Posts up to 600 yards behind the Regimental Aid Posts, through the Advanced Dressing Station (ADS), to the Main Dressing Station (MDS). It also provided a Walking Wounded Collecting Station, as well as various rest areas and local sick rooms. The Ambulances would usually establish 1 ADS per Brigade, and 1 MDS for the Division.

The Field Ambulances saw the full horror of war casualties: the cemeteries on and behind the battlefields mark the location of many of them, and of the CCSs.

## Regimental Aid Post



Here is a RAP in open ground near Monchy-le-Preux, 1917

Front-line units, such as infantry battalions, were able to provide only the most superficial medical care. Located near the front line, often in a support or reserve trench, was their Regimental Aid Post,

attended by the Battalion Medical Officer and his orderlies and stretcher bearers. A wounded man would either make his own way there if possible, or be carried there. The facilities were crude and often just sufficed to carry out light first aid, give the casualty a drink, or just pass him down the chain to the Advanced Dressing Station. The RAPs were manned by troops of the infantry or other unit.

Casualties moving on to the ADS were moved by hand carriage, wheeled stretchers, trolley lines, etc as conditions permitted. Those wounded men who could walk, did so. From 1916, relay posts for stretcher bearers were established every 1000 yards or so. To avoid congestion, certain communication trenches were allocated for the removal of casualties.



The Field Ambulance attached to the infantry brigade provided one or more Advanced Dressing Stations in reasonable proximity of the front lines. The ADS was better equipped than the RAP but could still only provide limited medical treatment. Men's wounds could be dressed, and some emergency

operations carried out. In times of heavy fighting, the ADS would be overwhelmed by the volume of casualties arriving. Often, wounded men had to lie in the open on stretchers for a considerable time. The wounded man would be passed on down the line to a CCS, often by the wagon transport of the Divisional Supply Column. Buses, charabancs, light and broad gauge railways were also used as conditions allowed.

In addition to the ADS, the Field Ambulance was also responsible for the stretcher bearer relay posts, walking wounded collecting stations, sick collecting stations and rest stations. A larger version of the ADS, the Main Dressing Station, was often provided for the Division.

### The next stop for most casualties was the Casualty Clearing Station



The CCS was the first large, well-equipped medical facility that the wounded man would visit. Its role was to retain all serious cases that were unfit for further travel, treat and return slight cases, and evacuate all others. It was usually a tented camp, although in the static trench areas the accommodation would sometimes be huts. CCS's were often grouped into clusters of two or three in a small area, usually a few

miles behind the lines and on a railway line. A typical CCS could hold 1,000 casualties at any time, and each would admit 15-300 cases, in rotation. At peak times of battle, even the CCS's were overflowing. Serious operations, such as limb amputations, were carried out here. Some CCS's were specialist units, for nervous disorders, skin diseases, infectious diseases, certain types of wounds, etc. CCS's did not move location very often, and the transport infrastructure of railways usually dictated their location. Most casualties came away by rail, although motor ambulances and canal barges also carried casualties to Base Hospitals, or directly to a port of embarkation if the man had been identified as a **Blighty** case. (In 1916, 734,000 wounded men were evacuated from CCS's by train; another 17,000 by barge, on the Western Front alone. There were 4 ambulance trains in 1914, and 28 by July 1916). The serious nature of many wounds defied the medical facilities and skills of a CCS, and many CCS positions are today marked by large military cemeteries.

CCS's also catered for sick men. Generally, considering the conditions, the troops were kept in good health. Great care was taken in reporting sickness and infection, and early preventive measures were taken. The largest percentage of sick men were venereal disease cases at 18.1 per 1000 casualties; trench foot was next with 12.7.

Until mid 1915, the CCS was known as a Clearing Hospital. Generally there was one provided for each Division.

From the CCS, the casualty would be evacuated to a hospital.

## General and Stationary Hospitals in France

Once admitted to a Hospital, the Tommy stood a reasonable chance of survival. More than half were evacuated to the UK from a General or Stationary Hospital for further treatment or convalescence.

The Stationary Hospitals, two per Division, could hold 400 casualties. The General Hospital could hold 1040 patients. They were located near the Army's principal bases at Boulogne, Le Havre, Rouen, Le Touquet and Etaples. The establishment of a General Hospital included 32 Medical Officers of the RAMC, 3 Chaplains, 73 female Nurses and 206 RAMC troops acting as orderlies, etc. The hospitals were enlarged in 1917, to as many as 2,500 beds.

## Treatment in Blighty

Casualties whose wounds permitted them to travel would often be moved back to the United Kingdom for treatment. This chance of seeing home and family was more attractive to many men than remaining unwounded in the trenches. Men would hope for a 'Blighty one'. One of the final destinations for a recovered wounded soldier was a Command Depot: **last stop before the return to hell!!** This was probably the route that Reginald followed.

The Director of Army Medical Services, Sir Alfred Keogh (after whom Keogh Barracks the present RAMC Depot is named) was highly concerned by the availability of beds in UK Hospitals. To increase these he established four large Convalescent Camps at Blackpool, Epsom, Dartford and Eastbourne.

This system was very successful in preventing what would today be called *bed blocking*. Early in 1916 it was decided to further refine the system by creating Command Depots for the rehabilitative training of soldiers too fit for Convalescent Camp, but not yet fit enough to be returned to unit.



## WHAT IS A R.F.A. BRIGADE

The Brigade was the basic tactical unit of the field artillery of the British Army in the Great War of 1914-1918. It was composed of a Brigade Headquarters and a number of batteries of guns or howitzers. At full establishment, a brigade of 18-lbr field guns consisted of 795 men, of whom 23 were officers. For a 4.5-inch howitzer brigade, this was 755 and 22. The following notes refer to the establishment of a field gun brigade. Where howitzer brigade details differ, they are highlighted.

The British artillery had three sections (alter four), all parts of the Royal Regiment of Artillery and each playing a distinct role.

**Royal Horse Artillery** The RHA was responsible for light, mobile guns that in theory provided firepower in support of the cavalry and in practice supplemented the Royal Field Artillery.

**Royal Garrison Artillery** The RGA was responsible for the heavy, large calibre guns and howitzers that were positioned some way behind the front line.

**Trench Mortar Batteries** Created during the war, the medium and heavy TMBs were manned by men of the artillery.

**Royal Field Artillery** The most numerous arm of the artillery, the RFA was responsible for the medium calibre guns and howitzers deployed close to the front line and reasonably mobile. It was organised into Brigades, attached to Divisions or higher formations.

The war of 1914-18 was an artillery war: artillery was the battle-winner, artillery was what caused the greatest loss of life, the most dreadful wounds, and the deepest fear (John Terraine, *White Heat - the new warfare 1914-18*)



## Brigade HQ

The Brigade was usually commanded by an officer with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. Brigade HQ also had two other officers : a Captain or Lieutenant filled the role of Adjutant (in charge of administration); similarly a Captain or Lieutenant was the Orderly Officer (responsible for stores and transport); an officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps was attached, as was an officer of the Veterinary Corps.

Brigade HQ also included a Sergeant-Major plus two Corporals, two Bombardiers, nine Drivers, 7 Gunners, a Clerk, and a Trumpeter. These filled roles as signallers, telephonists and assisted with range-taking duties.

A Corporal and 3 privates of the Royal Army Medical Corps were attached for water duties; 8 Gunners acted as Officers Batmen (personal servants), and 2 as Orderlies for the Medical Officer.

The Brigade HQ was in command of 3 Batteries and an Ammunition Column.

## Batteries

Usually lettered A to D, each of the Batteries numbered 198 heads at full establishment. Each was commanded by a Major or Captain, with a Captain as Second-in-Command, and 3 Lieutenants or Second-Lieutenants in charge of 2-gun sections. Battery establishment also included a Battery Sergeant-Major , a Battery Quartermaster Sergeant , a Farrier-Sergeant, 4 Shoeing Smiths (of which 1 would be a Corporal), 2 Saddlers, 2 Wheelers, 2 Trumpeters, 7 Sergeants, 7 Corporals, 11 Bombardiers, 75 Gunners, 70 Drivers and 10 Gunners acting as Batmen.

If asked, after his name, rank and number, a man might refer to himself as being in Number 3 Section, B Battery, the Xth Artillery Brigade. A Private soldier would also know the infantry brigade(s) his brigade supported, and certainly the Division the brigade was attached to.

## Brigade Ammunition Column

The Ammunition Column numbered 158 heads. Commanded by a Captain, with 3 Lieutenants or Second-Lieutenants, the job of the BAC was to bring ammunition and other supplies to the Battery positions from the Divisional dumps. It was divided into two sections. BAC establishment also included a Battery Sergeant-Major , a Battery Quartermaster Sergeant , a Farrier-Sergeant, 4 Shoeing Smiths (of which 1 would be a Corporal), 2 Saddlers, 2 Wheelers, a Trumpeter, 4 Sergeants, 5 Corporals, 5 Bombardiers, 30 Gunners, 96 Drivers and 3 Gunners acting as Batmen. Brigade Ammunition Columns disappeared in May 1916, when they were reorganised into Divisional Ammunition Columns.

## Also in the Brigade

Included in the figures shown above, were 34 Acting Bombardiers (one stripe; the equivalent of a Lance-Corporal). They were the MO's orderly, plus 9 in each Battery and 8 in the BAC.

Each Brigade had a detachment at its Base Depot, which did not take the field when the Battalion was on active service. The Base Detachment consisted - in theory - of a subaltern, 2 Sergeants, 5 Drivers and 41 Gunners to form a first reinforcement (to make good Brigade casualties or other losses); 4 Storemen, and a Sergeant-Clerk (who was on the headcount of the Records Section of the Adjutant-General's Office).

## Armaments and Equipment

At the outbreak of war, field gun batteries of the Regular Army had 6 guns, and those of the Territorial Force 4 guns. The standard weapons, which did not alter during the war other than by technical improvements, were the 18-lbr field gun, and the 4.5-inch howitzer.

Battalion Transport consisted of 13 riding , and 43 draught and pack horses. The provided the power for drawing the six ammunition carts, two water carts, three General Service Wagons (for tools and machine guns), and the MO's Maltese Cart. The Signallers had 9 bicycles. (Note: the Divisional Train also provided four more two-horsed GS Wagons for each Battalion.

Not all ranks carried a rifle. Only 5 men in Brigade HQ, 36 in each Battery, and all the Gunners and Drivers in the BAC were thus equipped. Bayonets were not issued. All NCOs and men wore a bandolier.

Other Brigade equipment, over and above that carried by the man, included 126 shovels, 18 spades, 72 pickaxes, 27 felling axes, 72 billhooks, 54 hand saws, 46 reaping hooks and a crowbar. There was also a plethora of minor stores and spares.

The Brigade also carried a certain amount of ammunition, although this was backed up by the echelons of Transport at Divisional and Lines of Communication levels.

<b>Ammunition stock (rounds per gun)</b>	<b>18-lbr</b>	<b>4.5-inch How.</b>
At the battery position	176	108
With the Brigade Ammunition Column	76	48
With the Divisional Ammunition Column	126	44
At the Divisional Ammunition Park	150	80
Other reserves, on Lines of Communication	472	520
<b>Total rounds per gun in the field (minimum)</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>800</b>

## Changes during the war

At the outbreak of the war, field gun batteries of the Regular Army had 6 guns, and those of the Territorial Force 4 guns. The latter also became the norm in the New Armies. A Division had 3 Field Brigades and 1 Howitzer Brigade. The Howitzer Brigades at Divisional level were broken up during May 1916, and the sections allocated to join the field gun Brigades, usually of the same Division. In January 1917, one of each Divisions three Brigades was taken under Army control. Brigade Ammunition Columns disappeared in May 1916, when they were reorganised into Divisional Ammunition Columns.

## Battle reality

Especially as the war progressed, it became rare for a Brigade to be at full establishment with regard to men. Equipment was lost, damaged or destroyed, and not always replaced quickly or fully. Field guns and howitzers were sometimes lost or abandoned to the enemy, if his infantry penetrated the infantry positions. The guns would almost always be destroyed first, by removing sights or exploding a charge in the barrel or breech.

## The usual British idiosyncrasies

Not at all the same as an infantry Brigade.

The infantry Brigade was an intermediate organisational unit, between the Battalion and Division. It should not be confused with an Artillery Brigade, which is a different type of unit altogether. In 1914, the establishment for a Brigade was 4 Battalions of infantry, plus the Brigade Headquarters.



Reginald Lyne Stephens – back row second from left.

**19th (Western) Division** - Formed at Bulford in September 1914 as part of the Second New Army. Arrived in France in July 1915. Served in France and Flanders until the Armistice.

### Battles and Engagements: France and Flanders

Battle of Loos. 25 Sep-8 Oct 1915.

Battle of Albert. 1-13 Jul 1916, including the capture of Montauban, Mametz, Fricourt, Contalmaison and La Boisselle. Attacks on High Wood. 20-25 Jul 1916.  
Battle of Pozieres. 23 Jul 1916, including the fighting for Mouquet Farm.  
Battle of the Ancre Heights. 1-11 Oct 1916, including the capture of the Schwaben Redoubt, Stuff Redoubt and the Regina Trench.  
Battle of the Ancre. 13-18 Nov 1916, including the capture of Beaumont Hamel.

Battle of Messines. 7-14 Jun 1917, including the capture of Wytschaete.

Battle of St. Quentin. 21-23 Mar 1918.

Battle of the Menin Road. 20-25 Sep 1917.

First Battle of Bapaume. 24-25 Mar 1918.

Battle of Polygon Wood. 26 Sep-3 Oct 1917.

Battle of Messines. 10-11 Apr 1918.

Battle of Broodside. 4 Oct 1917.

Battle of Bailleul. 13-15 Apr 1918, including the defence of Neuve Eglise.

Battle of Poelcappelle. 9 Oct 1917.

First Battle of Kemmel. 17-19 Apr 1918.

First Battle of Passchendaele. 12 Oct 1917.

Battle of the Aisne. 27 May-7 Jun 1918, including the attack on Bligny and Bois des Buttes.

Second Battle of Passchendaele. 26 Oct-10 Nov 1917.

Advance in Flanders. 18 Aug-6 Sep 1918.

Battle of the Selle. 17-25 Oct 1918.

Battle of Valenciennes. 1-2 Nov 1918, including the capture of Mont Houy.

Battle of the Sambre. 4 Nov 1918, including the passage of the Sambre-Oise canal and the capture of Le Quesnoy.

Passage of the Grande Honelle. 5-7 Nov 1918.

### Infantry Units

#### 56th Brigade.

7th Bn King's Own. Sep 1914 - 22 Feb 1918. Disbanded, personnel to the [1/4th](#) and [1/5th](#) Bns.  
4th Bn King's. 03 Dec 1915 - 19 Dec 1915. To the [58th Brigade](#).  
9th Bn Cheshire Regt. 07 Feb 1918 - 11 Nov 1918.  
7th Bn East Lancashire Regt. Sep 1914 - 22 Feb 1918. Disbanded.  
7th Bn South Lancashire Regt. Sep 1914 - 22 Feb 1918. Disbanded, personnel (23 officers and 640 men) to the 6th Entrenching Bn.  
7th Bn Loyal North Lancashire Regt. Sep 1914 - 10 Feb 1918. Disbanded, personnel to the [1st](#) and [2/5th](#) Bns.  
1/4th Bn King's Shropshire Light Infantry. 04 Feb 1918 - 11 Nov 1918.  
8th Bn North Staffordshire Regt. 07 Feb 1918 - 11 Nov 1918.

#### 58th Brigade.

4th Bn King's. 19 Dec 1915 - 25 Feb 1916. To the [33rd Division](#).  
9th Bn Cheshire Regt. 13 Sep 1914 - 07 Feb 1918. To the [56th Brigade](#).  
9th Bn Royal Welsh Fusiliers. 09 Sep 1914 - 11 Nov 1918.  
5th Bn South Wales Borderers. Sep 1914 - 29 Dec 1914. Became the [Pioneer Bn](#).  
9th Bn Welsh Regt. Sep 1914 - 11 Nov 1918.  
2nd Bn Wiltshire Regt. 13 May 1918 - 11 Nov 1918.  
6th Bn Wiltshire Regt. 29 Dec 1914 - 13 May 1918. Reduced to Training Cadre on 13 May 1918. Surplus personnel (20 officers and 509 men) to the [2nd Bn](#). Cadre to the [30th Division](#).

#### 57th Brigade.

10th Bn Royal Warwickshire Regt. Sep 1914 - 11 Nov 1918.  
8th Bn Gloucestershire Regt. Sep 1914 - 11 Nov 1918.  
3rd Bn Worcestershire Regt. 22 Jun 1918 - 11 Nov 1918.  
10th Bn Worcestershire Regt. Sep 1914 - 22 Jun 1918. Reduced to Training Cadre on 22 Jun 1918. Surplus personnel to the [3rd Bn](#), Cadre to the [25th Division](#).  
8th Bn North Staffordshire Regt. 18 Sep 1914 - 07 Feb 1918. To the [56th Brigade](#).

#### Pioneers.

5th Bn South Wales Borderers. 29 Dec 1914 - 11 Nov 1918.

Attached Troops.

6th Bn Wiltshire Regt. Sep 1914 - 29 Dec 1914. To the [58th Brigade](#).  
22nd Bn Durham Light Infantry. 17 Jun 1916 - 02 Jul 1916. To the [8th Division](#).

## Artillery Units

### **LXXXVI Brigade.**

268th Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became A Bty.  
269th Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became B Bty.  
270th Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became C Bty.

**LXXXVI Brigade. When the Brigade was reorganised a fourth Battery was formed. On 23 Jan 1917 the Brigade left the Division and became an Army Field Artillery Brigade.**

A Bty. Feb 1915 - 23 Jan 1917. With the Brigade to the Army Field Artillery.  
B Bty. Feb 1915 - 23 Jan 1917. With the Brigade to the Army Field Artillery.  
C Bty. Feb 1915 - 09 Sep 1916. Broken up and divided between A and B Btys.  
C (Howitzer) Bty. 12 Nov 1916 - 23 Jan 1917. Broken up and divided between D (Howitzer) Bty [LXXXVII Bde](#) and D (Howitzer) Bty [LXXXVIII Bde](#).  
D Bty. Feb 1915 - 25 May 1916. Went to [LXXXIX Bde](#) where it became A Bty.  
D (Howitzer) Bty. 25 May 1916 - 11 Nov 1918.

### **LXXXVII Brigade.**

271st Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became A Bty.  
272nd Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became B Bty.  
273rd Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became C Bty.

**LXXXVII Brigade. When the Brigade was reorganised a fourth Battery was formed.**

A Bty. Feb 1915 - 11 Nov 1918.  
B Bty. Feb 1915 - 11 Nov 1918.  
C Bty. Feb 1915 - 11 Nov 1918.  
D Bty. Feb 1915 - 25 May 1916. Went to [LXXXIX Bde](#) where it became B Bty.  
D (Howitzer) Bty. 25 May 1916 - 11 Nov 1918.

### **LXXXVIII Brigade.**

274th Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became A Bty.  
275th Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became B Bty.  
276th Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became C Bty.

**LXXXVIII Brigade. When the Brigade was reorganised a fourth Battery was formed.**

A Bty. Feb 1915 - 08 Sep 1916. Divided into two halves, one half joined B Bty the other half combined with C Bty from [LXXXIX Bde](#) to reform A Bty.  
A Bty. 08 Sep 1916 - 11 Nov 1918.  
B Bty. Feb 1915 - 11 Nov 1918.  
C Bty. Feb 1915 - 11 Nov 1918.  
D Bty. Feb 1915 - 25 May 1916 Went to [LXXXIX Bde](#) where it became C Bty.  
D (Howitzer) Bty. 25 May 1916 - 11 Nov 1918.

### **LXXXIX (Howitzer) Brigade.**

277th (Howitzer) Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became A (Howitzer) Bty.  
278th (Howitzer) Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became B (Howitzer) Bty.  
279th (Howitzer) Bty. Sep 1914 - Feb 1915. Became C (Howitzer) Bty.

**LXXXIX (Howitzer) Brigade. When the Brigade was reorganised a fourth Battery was formed. Further reorganisation took place in May 1916 when the Brigade lost its Howitzer designation.**

A (Howitzer) Bty. Feb 1915 - 25 May 1916. Went to the [LXXXVI Bde](#) where it became D (Howitzer) Bty.  
A (Howitzer) Bty. Feb 1915 - 07 Aug 1915. To the 28th Division where it eventually became [B \(Howitzer\) Bty, CXXX Bde](#).  
C (Howitzer) Bty. Feb 1915 - 25 May 1916. Went to the [LXXXVII Bde](#) where it became D (Howitzer) Bty.  
D (Howitzer) Bty. Feb 1915 - 25 May 1916. Went to the [LXXXVIII Bde](#) where it became D (Howitzer) Bty.

**Appendix (Notes records held by Rita.)**

Reginald Lyne Stephens - born in Peterborough 6.12.1894

Lance Bombardier R.F.A. No. 65344 88 Brigade

Batman to Major Herbert Thomas Amy

Joining: enlisted at Blandford for the duration of the war on 21st January 1915

Had the civilian trade of carter.

Height- 5ft 6 3/4 inches

Next of Kin at end of training Father: William Stephens of 23 St. Andrews Street North, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.

Other: H.T.Amy Lieut. R.F.A. – commanding 88th Brigade R.F.A. AM: OOL:

Entries in Soldiers Small Book signed by: C.S. Westell Lieut. R.F.A. –

Adjutant No. 3. Depot R.F.A.

Service: England 21st January 1915 – 17th July 1915 178 days

France 18th July 1915 – 16th October 1916 1 year 91 days

England 17th October 1916 – 2nd February 1917 109 days

France 3rd February 1917 – 10th January 1919 1 year 342 days

England 11th January 1919 – 31st March 1919 80 days

Campaign Medals: 1914-15 Star Victory Medal

Wounded: Severe gunshot wound to left arm 14th October 1916 (Stephens records it as 6.10.1916) A1 on leaving service.

Address on leaving the army in 1919: Church Street, Eye, Suffolk.

**Extracts from Reginald Stephens notes in the field:**

Self wounded: 6th October 1916

Major Amy wounded: 27th march 1918 Lt H killed: 27th March 1918 John

Terry left 88 Brigade: 8th July 1918 Somme 21st March 1918 Albert 29th

March 1918 Kemmel 9th April 1918 Biggest Bombardment 25th April started 17th to 19th train to S. France Colin killed on train 18th May South of France battle about 29th Returned North about 30th M August 4th By chance – with brother Hugh Stephens 26th and 27th August In action 29th August War ended 11th November 1918. In action at the time – Malplaquet.

Demobilised: from No. 1 Dispersal Unit Thetford on 27th January 1919.

Record Office: Woolwich Dockyard(?) Pay Office: Blackheath Command:

Eastern Rank: Lance Bombardier Born: 1893 (not true!! It was Dec 1894)

Medical Category: A1 Place to rejoin in emergency: Charlton Park Address for pay: Church Street, Eye, Suffolk.

Notes: A ration book was issued on 6th February 1919 by the Eye Borough Food Control Committee. Certificate of Employment during the War: It seems that from 18th February 1919 to 18th December 1919 Reg was working in the Officers Bhs(?) at No.1 Dispersal Unit Thetford.

\*Bhs will be "barracks". The dates indicate he worked there as a civilian].

Soldier's Demobilization Account: Reg received a total of £34.0.05 on demobilization, including a war gratuity of £23 (probably £1 was deducted if the military greatcoat was not returned). It seems that this was all paid in February 1919.

Handwritten notes in pocket book: Major H.T. Amy Craigleith (?) Hospital Major H.T. Amy, London Hospital, Whitechapel, London. E Mrs. H.T. Amy c/o Major Marshall, The Homestead, Hillcrest Road, Sydenham, London.

Letters from Mrs. Amy to Mrs Stephens giving locations 21st Jan 1917 Major Amy expects to come home in March. He hopes Stephens will rejoin him – if he does he will be at Miraumont (near Beaumont Hamel on the Ancre) 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1917. Sent Stephens two lots of cigarettes at the 51st H.D.A.C. before this date. 13th May 1917 Amy and Stephens at rest in a farmhouse with green fields all around at a village just outside Bailleul (France) and expect to rest for another week – but when they leave to go into action it will probably be to the north of Ypres (Belgium), from whence they came. Stephens turned up on the 12th(replacing Carrington) – Amy had to write to Brigadier Monkhouse for Stephens transfer papers. 31st Mar 1918 Is Stephens safe during this retreat?

Major Amy was at Trescault near Ribecourt (s.w of Cambrai) on the 19th. Major Amy was wounded on the 29th and admitted to the hospital at St. Pol (near Arras) and then moved to St. Johns Hospital Etaples with severe shell wounds in his shoulder and foot.

Letters from Mrs. Amy to Stephens (from the Amy home in Jersey) 7th Nov 1916 Stephen is wounded (shrapnel in arm and back) and is sent cigarettes.

24th Dec 1916 Stephens appears to be well enough to go home (presumably home to Bury St Edmunds). 15th Apr 1918 Amy now in the London Hospital (Whitechapel). Amy's foot really on which they operated in France – big toe taken off and part of the second toe and he may or may not lose the others on the same foot. Injuries in shoulder and arm are slight. Major Amy will be in bed for two months and six months before okay. Mrs. Amy staying with Major Marshall, The Homestead, Hillcrest Road, Sydenham.



## THE STEPHENS BROTHERS AND THE GREAT WAR

### Reginald D. Lyne Stephens – born 6<sup>th</sup> December 1894

Reginald joined the Royal Regiment of Artillery (R.H. and R.F.A) on 21st January 1915 at Blandford at the age of 21 years 1 month - he was enlisted in the 88th Brigade of the Royal Field Artillery number 65344.

At the time of joining he was a carter and his father, William, lived at 23 St. Andrews Street, North Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. Reginald was 5 feet 6 3/4 inches in height.

### *Handwritten notes in pocket book.*

*Self wounded 6<sup>th</sup> October 1916*

*Major Amy wounded 27<sup>th</sup> March 1918*

*Sgt Harrison(?) killed 27<sup>th</sup> March 1918*

*Colin Tovvy(?) left "88" 8<sup>th</sup> July 1918*

*Battle started (Somme) 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918*

*Albert 29<sup>th</sup> March 1918*

*???? 9<sup>th</sup> April 1918*

*25<sup>th</sup> April big bombardment*

*?? was started ??*

*17 to 19 train to South of France*

*Colin killed on train 18<sup>th</sup> May*

*South of France battle about 29<sup>th</sup>.*

*Returned North about 30<sup>th</sup> June(?)*

*Out for a rest north St. ??*

*Still at rest August 4<sup>th</sup>.*

*With Hugh 26 and 27<sup>th</sup> August*

*War ended on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918 at 11 o'clock. Action at the time Malplaquet.*

*In action around ? 29<sup>th</sup> August.*

### **Other notes:**

*Major H.T. Amy Craigleith (?) Hospital*

*Major H.T. Amy, London Hospital, Whitechapel, London. E*

*Mrs. H.T. Amy c/o Major Marshall, The Homestead, Hillcrest Road, Sydenham, London.*

*Many notes regarding food provisions, bedding & clothes (example 3 dozen eggs 18 francs)*

**Major Amy's effects noted in book:***Sir Suitcase*

1 Towel  
 1 Pr Slippers  
 1 Spuny (?)  
 1 Map Case  
 1 Compass  
 1 pr Wire Cutters  
 1 Coat Hanger  
 1 Pr Field Glasses  
 5 Ties  
 1 Field Glass  
 1 Pr Hair Brushes  
 Books, Photos, etc

*Kit bag and vallise contents also noted.*

<b>Reginald was awarded</b>	1914-15 Star British War Medal Victory Medal
<b>Demobilised</b>	from No. 1 Dispersal Unit Thetford on 27 <sup>th</sup> January 1919. Record Office: Woolwich Dockyard(?) Pay Office: Blackheath Command: Eastern Rank: Lance Bombardier Born: 1893 (not true!! It was Dec 1894) Medical Category: A1 Place to rejoin in emergency: Charlton Park Address for pay: Church Street, Eye, Suffolk.

Notes: The date of 27.1.1919 does not agree with the date above of 31.3.1920 – so Reg must have been at home on allowed furlough. A ration book was issued on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1919 by the Eye Borough Food Control Committee.

**Certificate of Employment during the War**

It seems that from 18<sup>th</sup> February 1919 to 18<sup>th</sup> December 1919 Reg was working in the Officers Baracks at No.1 Dispersal Unit Thetford.

**Soldier's Demobilization Account**

Reginald received a total of £34.0.05p on demobilization, including a war gratuity of £23 (probably £1 was deducted if the military greatcoat was not returned). It seems that this was all paid in February 1919.

**Hugh William Lyne Stephens – born 1891**

Hugh served as a private in the Military Transport Army Service Corp.

**Entries in Reg's pocket book:**

207813 Pte H.W. Lyne Stephens, Workshop Section, 59 Amm Sect Park, B.E.F.

207813 Pte. H.W. Lyne Stephens, A.S.C., M.T. 18<sup>th</sup> Army Brigade R4a, B.E.F. France.

207813 Pte. H.W. Lyne Stephens, 6<sup>th</sup> Div M.T. Company, B.E.F. France

**Gerald Stanley Lyne Stephens – born 1896**

Reginald Stephens had in his war 'pocket book' Gerald's address as 78 Westwood Street, Peterborough.

In same pocket book Gerald's address was given as Mr. G. Lyne Stephens, Mary Ward, West Suffolk, Hospital, Ipswich, Suffolk.

Gerald would have been about age 21 at the start of the War, and it is possible that the address in Reginald's pocket book was the hospital where Gerald taken after an industrial injury – according to 'family history' (but the information regarding an industrial injury may not be accurate information).

The hospital was in Ipswich and perhaps that is where Gerald met his future wife Jessie.

I am not sure whether Gerald served in the War.

However, I have found a medal card for a Gerald S Stephens – which seem as if it could be our Gerald. (pte. in 24<sup>th</sup> London Regiment 4776 and 721949).

**Douglas Gerard James Lyne Stephens – born 14<sup>th</sup> December 1903**

Too young to join up.

**Mrs. Amy letters to Reginald and Reginald's mother**

(Reg was batman to Major Amy)

Jambart  
Pontac  
Jersey

7 November 1916

Dear Stephens,

My husband has sent me your address as I thought you would like a few cigarettes. I am sorry you have been wounded. I hope the removal of the shrapnel from your back and arm was quite successful and that you are getting on well - my husband thinks so highly of you that I should like to be able to do some little thing for you whilst you are in hospital - will you let me know if you prefer any other kind of cigarettes to those & if there is any thing you would like to have - please do not mind letting me know, as I would have pleasure in sending it to you as you have looked after my husband with such care, and I am afraid he misses you greatly. I hope the pain is not great.

Believe me

Yours truly

E. Amy

N.B. I enclose paper and envelope as you may not have any in hospital.

24 Dec 1916

Dear Stephens,

I was very pleased to hear that you were well enough to be home again & I hope you have been able to enjoy your leave to the fullest extent. I have written to my husband & told him where to apply for you & I know he will do so at once. Just now we are rather limited for steamers from the islands & there is not one leaving before Tuesday & my letters take such a time to get to him.

If you have a spare photograph of yourself in uniform will you kindly let me have one, as I feel so interested in 'one' who has taken such care of my husband's requirements etc and when the war is over Major Amy and I will like to keep it as one of the "nice remembrances" of war time. I am sending you a few cigarettes for the New Year, you should get them from the firm on Thursday morning.

yours truly

E. Amy

21 Jan 1917

Dear Mrs. Stephens,

Thank you so much for sending me your son's photographs. I think them very good, and I am very pleased to have them and am quite sure my husband will appreciate them when he comes home in March.

My husband has done all he possibly can to get your son back and in his last letter says he hopes it will be very soon, as he always did his work etc so dutifully. Supposing by ill-luck that Stephens could not get back with my husband, would you please ask him to let me have his address as my husband and I do not wish to lose sight of him. I am waiting to thank him today and sending him a few cigarettes. If your son goes back with Major Amy he will be at "Miramount" - quite near Beaumont Hamel on the Ancre where there is now severe fighting. I thought you would like to know.

Believe me.

Yours sincerely

E. Amy

23 May 1917

Dear Mrs. Stephens,

I was very pleased to hear from you and to know that you are glad your son is with my husband. Do you know I sent him two lots of cigarettes at the 51st H.D.A.C. and had no acknowledgement from him so am quite sure he never received them, two of his letters certainly never reached my husband.

They are now in rest since the 13th, they are in a farmhouse with green fields all around which is so peaceful after all the "mess" they have been in. In today's letter my husband says they expect to be in rest for another week. They are in rest in a village just outside Bailleul (France) but when they leave to go into action it will probably be to the north of Ypres (Belgium) from whence they came.

My husband told me that Stephens turned up on the 12th and that he had to write to Brigadier General Monkhouse for his transfer papers etc; anyhow he is quite delighted to have Stephens now and has always something nice to say about him, even today he says "Stephens tells me I want handkerchiefs", your son is so absolutely reliable in every way my husband depends on him for so many things: that he feels quite happy now, and most of my letters etc are entrusted to your boy's care and my husband's chief thought in anyone is "punctuality" and your boy has never been late in any way, and everything he does is quite perfect. I also feel absolutely relieved to know Stephens is with my husband. I know Carrington did his best and my husband is making him 'mess servant' but he could never be anything like Stephens. The last letter I had from Stephens was on May 1st when he gave me his address which I sent on to my husband immediately.

With kind regards.

Believe me

Yours sincerely

E. Amy.

15 April 1918

Dear Stephens,

Thank you so very much for writing to me. I was pleased to know you are safe and well. I cannot yet give you any particulars about my husband's unit but will do so as soon as I have seen him.

I am going up to London tomorrow so as to be near him. He is now at "The London Hospital" His foot is really bad on which they operated on in France & took off the big toe and part of the second, he may or may not lose the others on the same foot, but it all depends on how the foot heals up. The injuries in the shoulder and arm are slight. I am sending you some cigarettes which I hope will reach you alright.

My address for the nest few months will be c/o Major Marshall, The Homestead, Hillcrest Road, Sydenham, London. I was forgetting to tell you that the medical people consider my husband will be in bed for two months & probably six months before he is alright.

Please write to me from time to time and inform me if ever you change your address whilst you are not with my husband.

yours truly

E. Amy

31 Mar 1918

Dear Mrs. Stephens,

I thought I must write to ask you if your son is safe, I felt rather anxious about him during this retreat. My husband was at Treseault near Ribecourt that is S.W. of Cambrai on the 19th.

I had two wires from the war office yesterday, the first one to say my husband was wounded and had been admitted at the hospital at St. Pol (near arras). The second wire that he was at Etaples shell wounds severe in shoulder and foot and that a visit from me was not possible.

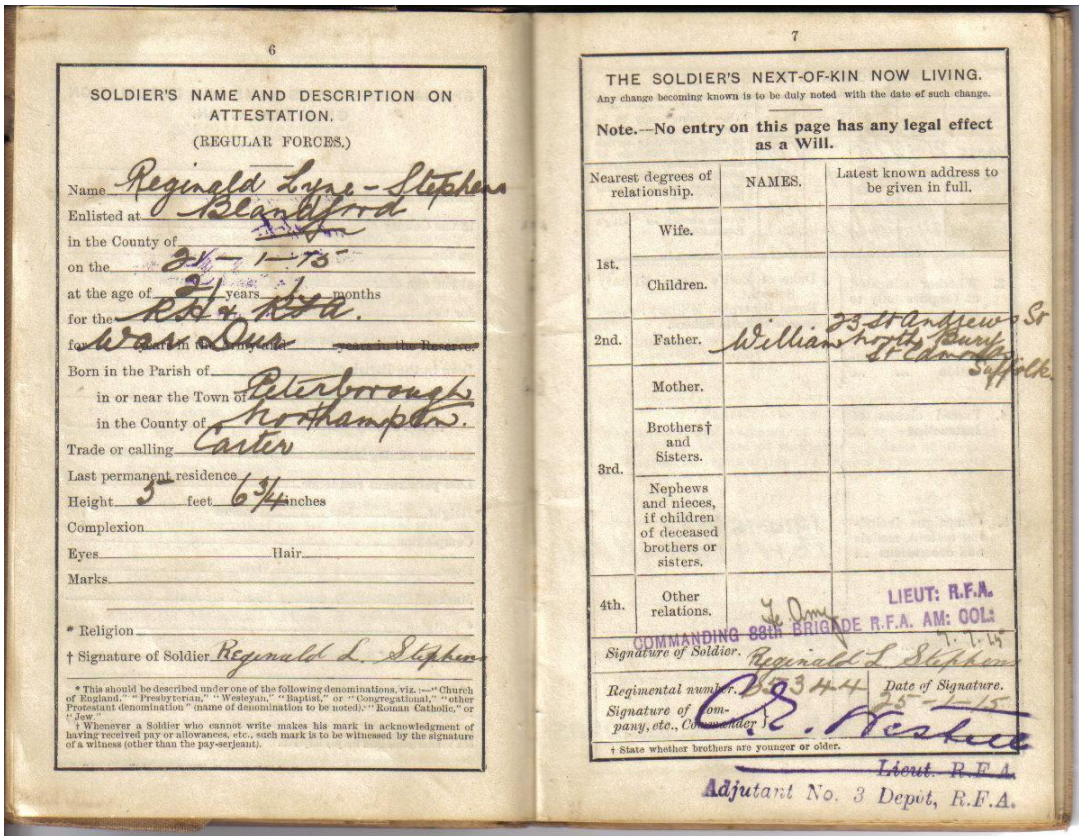
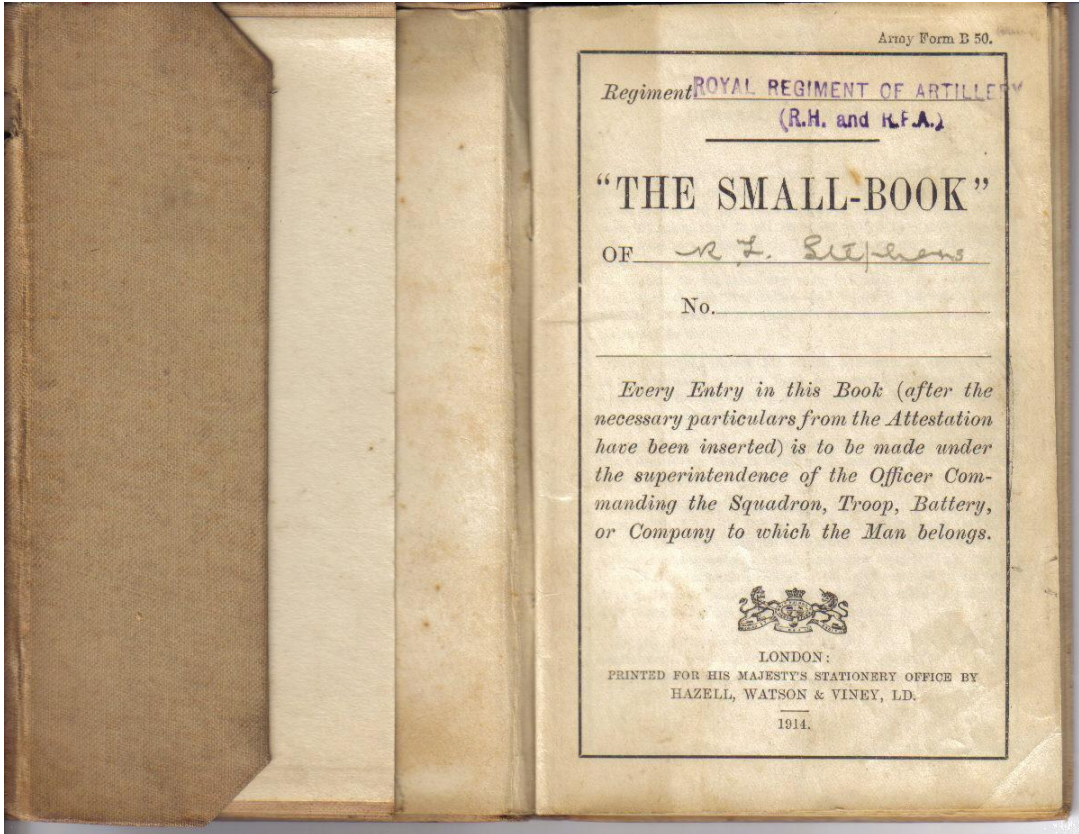
He was wounded on the 29th therefore must have come through the retreat safely until then, as I think your son will be alright as he must have gone onwards or rather retreated before the guns.

It would be such a relief to me to know he is safe, you see my husband and I feel so very interested in him, he has been so absolutely reliable in every way right away through all. I also hope your other son is safe, my husbands address is St. John's Hospital, Etaples, France should your son wish to know it. Of course by the time you get this it may have changed again.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

E. Amy



PARTICULARS OF SERVICE.				
Country.	From	To	Years.	Days.
HOME	2/15	17/15	-	178
FRANCE	18/15	16/16	1	91
HOME	17/16	2/17	-	109
FRANCE	3/17	10/17	1	347
HOME	11/17	3/18	-	80

N.B.—Country only to be shown; it is unnecessary to show separately service in different stations of same country. England, Scotland, and Ireland to be shown under general term "Home." For mode of computing service abroad, see "King's Regulations."

2. Whether educated at (applies only to boys) ... Duke of York's Royal Military School.  
Royal Hibernian Military School.  
Queen Victoria School.

3. Certificates of education ...

4. Passed classes of Instruction ...

5. Campaigns including actions, medals and decorations ... 1914-15 Star  
16 W 9 Victory Medal

6. Wounded ... L.S. Wound  
L. ARM SEVERELY 14/16

7. Effects of Wounds ...

P. A. RECORDS.

PARTICULARS OF SERVICE—(continued).

8. Special instances of gallant conduct and mentioned in public despatches

9. Annuities...

10. Injuries in or by the service ...

PARTICULARS OF MARRIAGE.

(a) Christian and surname of woman to whom married;  
(b) Place and date of marriage; (c) Name of officiating minister or registrar; and (d) Names of the witnesses.

(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	Date of being placed on married roll.

PARTICULARS AS TO CHILDREN.

Christian name.	Date and place of birth.	Date and place of baptism and name of officiating minister.

Self Wounded Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 1916  
 Major Army Wounded Medal 27/16  
 St. Armand Medal March 27/18  
 John Long left 27/18

(Lorraine)

Battle started 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918  
 Albert 29<sup>th</sup> March 1918.  
 1<sup>st</sup> March 9<sup>th</sup> April 1918.  
 25 April Biggest Bombardment since war started  
 17 to 19 train to South of France  
 John killed on train 18<sup>th</sup> May  
 South of France Battle started from 29<sup>th</sup>. Retreated North about 30 out for a rest. March 4<sup>th</sup>  
 Still out at Paris Aug 4<sup>th</sup>.  
 With Hugh 26-27<sup>th</sup> Aug.  
 In action around Baron 29<sup>th</sup> Aug

War ended on 11<sup>th</sup> Nov 1918  
 at 1100. In action at the time  
 Malplaquet



4. Military qualifications as shewn in A. B. 64.

5. Special Remarks as to qualifications, work done, or skill acquired during service with the Colours. This is required as a help in finding civil employment.

Soldier's Signature  
(For identification purposes).

*R. Stephens*

Signed

*F. J. Parker*

(Rank)

*S. Col.*

Commanding *No 1 Dispensary* (Unit)

**THETFORD.**

NOTES.—The object of this certificate is to assist the soldier in obtaining employment on his return to civil life. The form will be completed as soon as possible in accordance with Demobilization Regulations.

As soon as signed and completed it will be given to the soldier concerned and will remain his property. He should receive it as early as is compatible with making the necessary references in order that he can either send it home or keep it in his possession.

One form will be issued to each man, and no duplicate can ever be issued.

(S 17 5) W6933—GD1339 5,000,000 10/18 HWV(P598)  
3,000,000 11/18

Army Form Z. 18.

## CERTIFICATE OF EMPLOYMENT DURING THE WAR.

(To be completed for, and handed to, each soldier.)

A soldier is advised to send a copy rather than the original when corresponding with a prospective employer.

It is particularly important that an apprentice whose apprenticeship has been interrupted by Military Service should have recorded on this form any employment in a trade similar to his own on which he has been engaged during such Military Service.

Regtl. No. 65344 Rank Lt Bdr.  
Surname STEPHENS.  
(block letters)  
Christian Names in full REGINALD.  
Regt. R 7 a. Unit 88 Bde.

### 1. Regimental Employment.

	Nature of.	Period.
(a)	<u>Officers Bn.</u>	From <u>Feb-18</u> To <u>Dec 18</u>
(b)	"	"
(c)	"	"
(d)	"	"

### \*2. Trade or calling before Enlistment (as shown in A. B. 64).

### 3. Courses of Instruction and Courses in Active Service Army Schools, and certificates, if any.

(a) \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) \_\_\_\_\_  
(c) \_\_\_\_\_  
(d) \_\_\_\_\_

\*The trade or calling must be filled in by the O.C. Unit from the Appendix to Special Army Order No. 6, of 21st October, 1918 (329 of November, 1918).

[P.T.O.]

IF FOUND, please drop this Certificate in a Post Office letter box. Army Form Z. 11.

**NOTICE.**—"This document is Government property. It is no security whatever for debt, and any Person being in possession of it, either as a pledge or security for debt, or without lawful authority or excuse, is liable under Section 156 (9) of the Army Act to a fine of twenty pounds (£20) or imprisonment for six months, or to both fine and imprisonment."

**PROTECTION CERTIFICATE AND CERTIFICATE OF IDENTITY**  
(SOLDIER NOT REMAINING WITH THE COLOURS).

Dispensal Unit Stamp and date of dispensal. 9.  
4

Surname STEPHENS  
(Block letters)

Christian Names REGINALD

Regtl. No. 65344 Rank Private Record Office Woolwich Dockyard

Unit 88 Bde RE Regt. or Corps R.F.A. Pay Office Blackheath

I have received an advance of £2. † Address for Pay Church St

(Signature of Soldier) R. L. Stephens Eye Suffolk

The above-named soldier is granted 28 days' furlough from the date stamped hereon pending\* 1 (as far as can be ascertained) which will date from the last day of furlough after which date uniform will not be worn except upon occasions authorized by Army Orders.

Theatre of War or Command } Eastern  
Born in the Year } 1893  
Medical Category } A.I.  
Place of rejoining in case of emergency } Charlton Park  
Specialist Military Qualification } \_\_\_\_\_

\* If for Final Demobilization insert 1.  
Disembodiment insert 2.  
Transfer to Reserve insert 3.

† As this is the address to which pay and discharge documents will be sent unless further notification is received, any change of address must be reported at once to the Record Office and the Pay Office as noted above, otherwise delay in settlement will occur.

*R. L. Wade*

**This Certificate must be produced when applying for an Unemployed Sailor's and Soldier's Donation Policy or, if demanded, whenever applying for Unemployment benefit.**

Date 27/1/19 Office of Issue Thetford Policy issued No. 9065492

**This Certificate must be produced when cashing Postal Drafts and Army Money Orders for weekly pay whilst on furlough.**


The Postmaster will stamp a ring for each payment made.

P.O. Stamp to be impressed here when Savings Bank Book is issued.

(1)

Army Form W 5077.

**POST CARD.**  
ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE.



To \_\_\_\_\_

No. 60344 Rank L Pdr.

Name Stephen Reginald L.

Corps \_\_\_\_\_

Address Church St  
Eye  
Suffolk

No. 9068 G 1863 2,000,000 W B & L

Please note that owing to the pressure of Demobilization I have not been found possible to forward to you your <sup>(\*Discharge</sup> <sub>(\*Disembodiment</sub> Certificate <sup>(\*Transfer to Reserve</sup> (Army Form Z. 21) as to reach you on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ when your Demobilization furlough terminates, and on which date you are <sup>\*discharged.</sup> <sup>\*transferred to Reserve.</sup> <sup>\*disembodied.</sup>

This Certificate will be sent to you by \_\_\_\_\_ Pending its arrival you should attach this postcard to your Present Certificate, which will extend the validity of the former until the date \_\_\_\_\_ It must be clearly understood that this temporary extension of your Present Certificate does not entitle you to any extension of Military Pay or other emoluments beyond the date on which your 28 days' furlough expires.

(2) You should notify any change of address at once on a postcard or letter to the Officer i/c Records (see address below).

(3) If there is any particular reason (such as proceeding overseas) why your Army Form Z. 21 should be received prior to the date \_\_\_\_\_ at (A) you should at once communicate with the Officer i/c Records \_\_\_\_\_ address below).

Address of Record }  
Office to be stamped here. } → 21 FEB 1919

\* Strike out where not applicable. (A) Insert date when it is calculated the Soldier's Demobilization Records will be completed.

Name.	Corps.	Rank.	Regtl. No.
STEPHENS	RFA	lyne	65344
	"	"	"
<i>Reginald L</i>			
Medal.	Roll.	Page.	Remarks.
VICTORY	RFA 197/B	19408.	
BRITISH	"	"	
15 STAR	RFA/5A+B 4827		
Theatre of War first served in (1) France			
Date of entry therein 19.7.15			

K 1380.

Correspondence.

Address.

THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE INCLUDED MERELY TO GIVE A 'FLAVOUR' OF THE CONDITIONS AND THE MIND OF THE BRITISH SOLDIER IN ADVERSITY .



Bert Spires was an insurance office manager and "joined up" at the end of 1916 at the age of 32. He was assigned to the Royal Field Artillery to be trained as a signaller. In 1917 he embarked for France, on draft for 23 Division in the Ypres salient in Belgium. He kept a diary during his service in Belgium and later in Italy, and this is the subject of this site. He describes his experiences in note form, from the day he landed in France. He mentions unit casualties with dates and locations as well as a wealth of information on his movements. He survived the war, dying in 1940, after a successful post war career in the insurance industry.



Rome - 11 May 1918

**6th June 1918**

Decorated by Gen Babington with Military Medal.

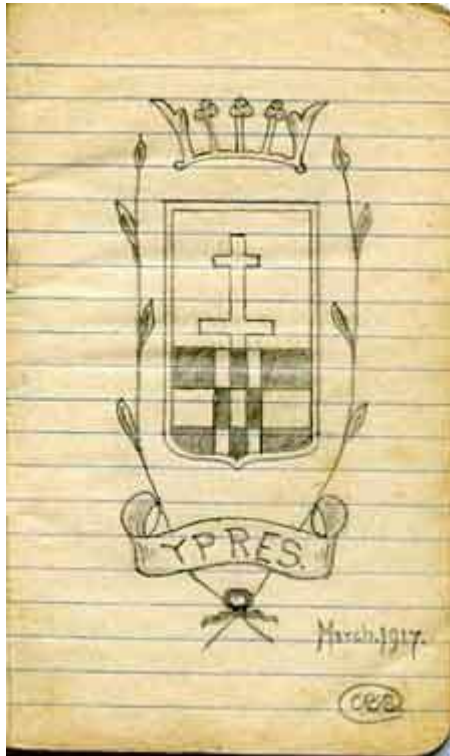
Press cutting from The Derby Evening Telegraph - June  
1918

**THE ROLL OF HONOUR**

**DERBY BOMBARDIER WINS MILITARY MEDAL**

Bombr Charles Bertram Spires of the R.F.A. has been awarded the Military Medal for gallantry in the field in Italy. The report states that "On the 15th of June 1918, this NCO was in charge of the Battery signallers. During an intense bombardment the telephone dugout had a direct hit and all wires were destroyed. He immediately ran out a new line to group headquarters under extremely heavy fire, and it was entirely due to his gallantry that communications with group headquarters was re-established." His home address is 28 Silverhill Road. He joined the Army on September 7th 1916, was drafted to France in February 1917 and then to Italy in November last year. Prior to enlistment he was assistant superintendant of the Britannic Assurance Co.

The Diary - with some of his sketches to give some idea of what Reg might have experienced (<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/tedspires/index.htm>)





Le Havre 16 February 1917

Disembarked 6am. Name of boat Edward VII. Marched to camp at Harfleur (6 Kilos). After numerous parades and inspections was detailed to signaller's lines (L troop 11 camp). Second day had tests on buzzer, flags, disc and lamp. In charge of tent. Gym for 2 hrs each day on hill disgusted with system of 'bending', practiced by gym instructors. Had 1 day gas course on hill. Weather cold but bright. Route march up Seine. On draft for line 23 Div. March 2nd. Party Haggis, Keen, Saunders, Cooper, Accleton, Shoey and self. 2 days rations travelled civi coach. Saw dirigible flying up Seine estuary. Splendid view from top of hill.



Rouen 4th March 1917

Arrived after 36 hrs train travelling from Le Havre. Marched to rest camp(5k). 22 in tent. Food poor. Dock fatigues. Decent cinema. Large camps of Australians and Indians. Noticed particularly large quantities of mistletoe on trees as we marched to camp.

St Omer 12th March 1917

Arrived after 48 hrs train travelling from Rouen. Should have de-trained at Watten. Billeted in French barracks. Had a walk about the town which is fair size and has number of very decent buildings. Visited cinema and YMCA.



Watten 13th March 1917

Arrived by train from St Omer(12k). Small village on canal banks. Billeted in barn. Had good rations, steak, onions, cheese, bread, butter, jam and tea. Messed in farm kitchen. Fitted with box respirator.

Rumingen 14th March 1917

Marched from Watten (8k).DAC lines. Billeted in pigsty but owing to rotten stink found better place in strawbarn next to cows. Visited an estaminet in the evening. Horse line fatigues and sundry walks about the village. Ordered to join 'C' Battery then at Polincove on manoeuvres.

Polincove 16th March 1917

Marching and motor transport from Rumingen (15k).C Battery in orchard and men billeted in barns. Battery on manoeuvres. Detailed to be OC's signaller for 17th (Capt Warden). Had a full day mounted on open action work and was a dud at it. Flag drill in the orchard and station work on fields. Old hen made her nest on my kip in barn and was a regular layer. Had my first view of 'sausages' also of Hun aeroplane under fire. Pretty sight.



Roebruk 19 th March 1917

Column of route from Polincove. Wet through rain and snow all day. Had late dinner - stew. Rum issue later. Billeted in hayloft. Some of the boys raided an estaminet and beer was on tap all night. In same sub section found a Charles Scurr from Spennymoor.

Watou 20th March 1917

Column of route from Roebruk. Wet and weary within sound and earthshake of our 'heavies' . Saw Boche planes under fire. Pretty sight. Saw our observation balloons again. Worked on horse lines and general fatigues. Keen, Haggis and I transferred 'B' Battery/103 Bde. OC Major Powell. Billeted in tents. Watou a fair sized town.

On 22nd detailed to proceed to Wormhout as NCO i/c signallers for a course. Hennegham, Willes, Read, Cooper, Hasler and myself. Mounted and joined other battery and HQ parties.



Wormhout 22nd March 1917

Arrived mounted from Watou(8K). Billeted in tumbledown old barn. Had a real good time whilst on course. Plenty of good food. Decent town. Eggs and chips suppers. Flag drill in orchard Bdr T Walker i/c. Station work in the fields etc. Had tests in Chateau on buzzer, lamp, helio, Semaphore and morse. Saw a Fullerphone for the first time. Decent weather but wakened one morning to find ourselves covered in snow. English newspapers can be purchased.

Watou 6th April 1917

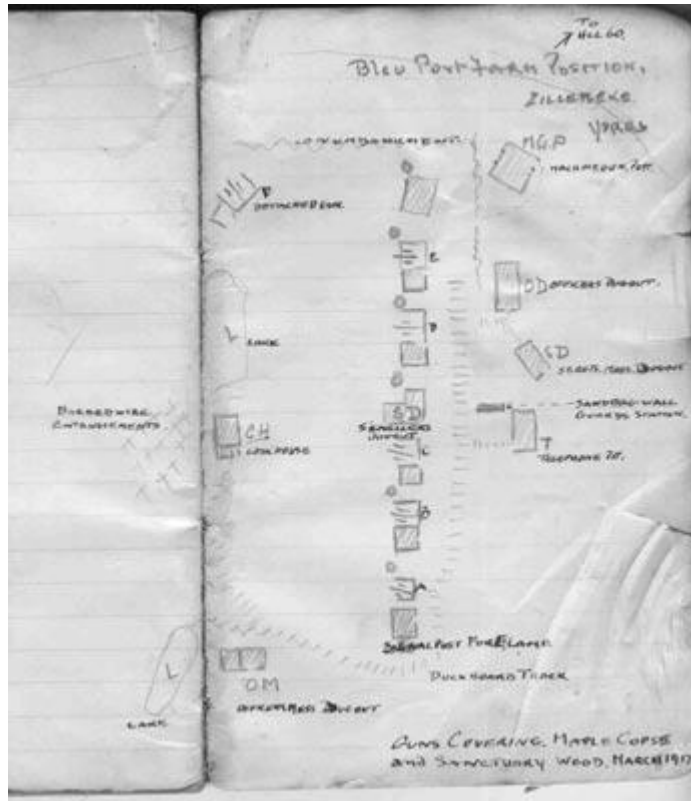
Arrived mounted from Wormhout. Had the usual horseline work in awful morass of slimy mud. Terrific bombardment on right, tent and ground shook and trembled all night. Detailed to take officers kit to Poperhinghe but cancelled. Left wagon lines for advance up line. Wretched weather and dreary march. Passed through Poperhinghe en route to Ouderdom. Noticed refugees houses as we travelled made of lath and plaster with straw roofs some houses made of biscuit tins, ration boxes etc.

### Ouderdom Good Friday

Arrived column of route from Watou. Here was our wagon line. Hail and sleet all day. WL shelled and saw our first casualties 2 killed 5 wounded. Two Belgians shot as spies. At dusk climbed on top of GS wagon and started for position. Held up several times owing to road being shelled. Passed through Ypres, the ruined city, in pitch darkness. The Cloth Hall was a mass of debris but the cathedral tower was still standing and the enormous shrine on the eastern side was untouched. Passing through the Lille gate we traversed 'Hellfire corner', 'Shrapnel Corner' down by 'Transport Farm' and so to 'Bleuport Farm' our position in a belt of trees. It was at Ouderdom where the Belgians at a farmhouse used to remove the handle from the pump to prevent us obtaining drinking water. Of course they sold coffee and ale, as they had no sugar, sweets were used to sweeten the coffee. Another farm opposite was like a 'dry' canteen and we could purchase almost anything we required.

### Zillebeke April 1917 .

Arrived on GS wagon via Ypres. Position 'Bleuport Farm' on right of Zillebeke. The farm consisted of two heaps of rubble, cookhouse under one and the officers mess under the other. The guns were some distance to the right on rising ground and gunners and telephonists dugouts between the gun pits. The two Haslers and I had a disused machinegun emplacement which was the best little dugout on the position but had one objection - rats galore including 'Sniffler' who must have been gassed at some time.



Zillebeke is on the left front and Ypres on the left rear and being on an elevated position we get a good view of both. Maj Powell was wounded at OP Hedge St trench first day. Lt Polglaze, CO, Cooper and I have to tramp each day to Lille gate via Bedford House, Hellfire corner and Shrapnel corner for training on lamp. Most days under shell fire both ways. Becoming a first class sprinter. Duckboards from cookhouse to dugout under machinegun fire at night. Razor and I take rum issue to SOS OP on the Menin Road, Zillebeke one night and had a lively time both ways in pitch darkness. Fritz found us on 24th April and gave us a rough time 5.9" and 8". On 26th April we got the whole issue blown to the sky with only 5 wounded. 12hrs of 4.2", 5.9" and 8". Some doing. Slept in dug-out in bund and crawled back to position to view damage. 5 guns buried and bust. Cemetery bashed about.

Ouderdom 27th April 1917

Tramped to Lille gate (Ypres) then mounted. So absolutely beat from bumping of previous day that before reaching the Lille gate fell into a small lake and had a job to get out. At the YMCA Ypres, which is under a large shop the chap took pity on us and took us to a dark corner and gave us a tot of whisky each -it was great. Jay was with my horse behind the cavalry barracks. So tired I could hardly keep in the saddle. To med matters near Ouderdom met two steam rollers at work and of course my old animal must gyb and had to jump three ditches to get past. Had test immediately on arrival and of course being dead beat - failed. Had lamp and helio practice each morning. Billeted in same old kennel. Battery came out of action 26th and we made ready to move out to rest.



Hardifort 3rd May 1917

Arrived column on route from Ouderdom. Between Cassell and Wormhout. Had a good journey in decent country. Civilians all busy with setting seeds. Interested in the peculiar and antiquated implements used. Billeted on a farm in big barns. On horse lines and did one 'gun' guard. No tent so had to sleep under the gun. Fresh. General's inspection of Battery. Colonel's inspection of horses etc. Grand weather. Owing to having lost my cap in action have to wear my tin hat all the time. Haslers and I regularly visit the 'Au Nouveau' estaminet as the ale is not so bad and the oeufs were certainly good. Madame insists on calling me 'M le Pisspot' because of the tin hat. Did a bit of bird nesting. Violets plentiful and pretty, sent some home.

Ypres 10th May 1917

Arrived column of route from Hardifart. Position right of Menin Road. WhiteChateau. Arrived as usual in the dark and by the same route as before. Ypres was more smashed up than ever. Our dug-out back of mess and against a small lake which teems with an endless variety of aquatic life. Cuth and I patrol lines (telephone) up to the front line on the 11th and Fritz chased us with Whizz-bangs for about 3 hrs. When we landed at the bottom of Zillebeke lake for a rest and had a heated argument on what the date was as Cuth's birthday is on 10th. It was my birthday and I won't forget it. Up the trenches most days on various duties. 'C' battery has a hot time. We are gassed (3 shells at dug-out door). Slept with Wernham who was killed.

June 7th. Shell entered old dug-out and killed Cpl Howlett.

June 6th was great, Razor and Bulmer wounded several gunners too. Few gassed. Fritz knocks us right out of position and we take up new one close to Zillebeke lake. Nothing exciting here. Move position again to sunken road near Hill 60. Fritz didn't find us until last few days, when he did we had it hot. Night before we came out of action shell burst in dug-out killing Golder and Barnsley. What a mess the poor lads were in. Buried them night we moved out. We were in action for 7 weeks and it would need a family bible to enter all the details of this period.

La Clytte 22nd June 1917

Arrived. Marched from Larch Wood position. We, 10 signallers, tramped it in the night and what a nervous sample we were. We passed lots of heavy batteries in action and at last entered Dickebusche village, or what remains of it. Anyway we saw the first house with a chimney pot intact upon it that we had seen for weeks. Also found a YMCA which had a rough time but was open day and night. We spent some francs here. Arrived back at wagon lines about 02-30 and billeted under wagons. Erskine went to sleep under a wagon and woke under the sky. We moved out of WL to rest at 10-30

Fletre 23rd June 1917



Arrived column of route from La Clytte. Billeted on farm. Decent coffee. Spent most of time in cleaning all the signal gear which was in bad condition. Both Fletre and Castre very decent towns of fair size and containing a number of shops and estaminets etc. Had pork chops with eggs. Had a few words with Mlle on the merits and demerits of her oeufs (eggs). Bought Mary a rosary f6-50 and also a few cards. General distributed Military Medals to five NCO's and men. Interesting ceremony. Ginger Kennerley blew salute and signallers were on special guard. Bivouacs in orchard.

Dickebusche 30th June 1917

Arrived column of route from Fletre. WL, tents and bivouacs back of ruined farm plums, pears, peaches galore. Fritz continually shelling balloons with naval gun. Interesting time watching observers descending by parachute when balloons are hit.

Ypres 1st July 1917

Arrived. Tramped from Dickebusche WL to position at Bedford House. Had a bumping first day and had to nip. Too near crossroad and 9.2" battery to be really comfortable or healthy. Big dug-out in garden of house and 8" shells used to make it rock like a boat. Had to nip a few times. Were chased out of position three times in 24hrs. One 5.9" skimmed end of telephone pit and scattered the ditch. Another lifted No.3 gun out of her pit and smashed her up. Another day Reid, Erskine and I were left on position in telephone pit when a 5.9" hit at the side of the pit and tipped us up. Narrow shave - we sprinted again. Gassed by mustard gas for first time. Saw some fine air fights. Several Bosche and some of ours down in various forms also a few balloons fired.



Battery moves to forward position leaving 5 signallers and the cook to guard position. Not so bad but had a rough passage one night 8" near telephone pit gave Taffy and Cuth a chasing. Then followed gas galore and we all packed in a little open front dug out - what a night. Two pits blown up and one on fire. Great dump ablaze. Teams dashing by at full stretch. Fine sight. Railway to rear blown up everyday. Working party click - two killed seven wounded. Convoy on road got shelled one night - small Hell.

Dickebusche 24th July 1917

Arrived by GS wagon from Bedford House position. Spent my time in cleaning up Signal stores and making a few alterations to instruments. Maj Richards proves to be a little regimental.

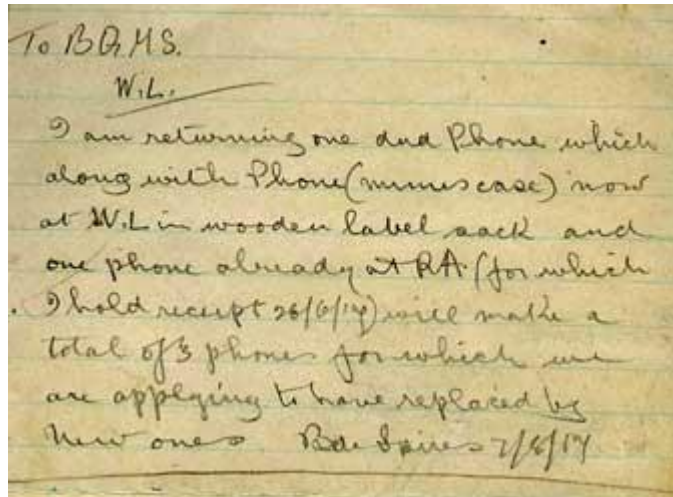
15M/11  
 during the day 25th  
 Saw Home Captured  
 all the ~~for~~ Objective  
 with moderate Cas;  
 AAA 603 Prisoners  
 including 14 Officers  
 have passed through  
 Dig. Cage, AAA Cont.  
 Rest of Army front  
 all objectives taken  
 with Small Gas attack

Zillebeke 28th July 1917

Arrived having tramped from Dickebusche WL. Position  
 Knoll Road, rather a hot shop. Dug-outs made of old  
 trench. Some crush and when it rains like a river.  
 Lines (telephone) difficult to maintain. Push commenced  
 03-45 on 31st usual artillery preparation. Was at OP and  
 had a splendid view of a most remarkable fight. 8 tanks  
 wobbled over Hedge St. 5 over Crab Crawl and many  
 more on the left. Batteries galloped up into action in  
 great style. Pack horses by the thousand. 04-30  
 prisoners started to come in and passed us in a continual  
 stream until 14-00. Nearly all were wounded. Of course  
 soon after we kicked-off it began to rain. One tank stuck  
 at Hedge St and two on Observation Ridge.

Dickebusche 9th August 1917.

Arrived having tramped from Knoll Road, Zillebeke and didn't waste much time on the journey as Fritz had  
 just registered our position.

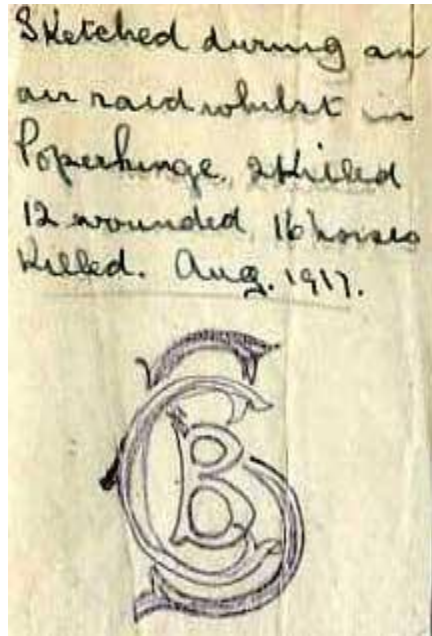


To B.G.M.S.  
W.L.  
I am returning one dud phone which  
along with phone (minus case) now  
at W.L. in wooden label sack and  
one phone already at RA (for which  
I hold receipt 26/6/17) will make a  
total of 3 phones for which we  
are applying to have replaced by  
new ones. Bde Spine 2/6/17

Poperhinghe 11th August 1917

Arrived mounted column of route from Dickebusche. Reserve  
battery but was soon called into action.

Had pass to Pop which is a rather important centre for troops for the Ypres sector. Station and vicinity frequently shelled  
by long range gun and bombed by night.



Bde billeted in one compound on north side of town. Met Bdr Hutchinson on cycle he is attached to HQ staff. Heard that Logan was wounded the day we came out of action. Fritz bombed every night and 'C' Battery clicked again with one killed and 12 wounded. We had 1 killed Jack Eley- poor old Jack. 16 horses also went west what a night. Billets of canvas over pine pole frames. West Indians had wind up proper and at times bolted into our bivouac for cover.

St Jean 18th August 1917

Arrived mounted from Poperhinghe position via Brielen which had one lamp post to indicate it had at some time been a fair sized village. Fritz had all the roads taped and as a result they were lined with dead horses and smashed wagons.



We were in the most advanced position and used Fritz's concrete machinegun emplacements as telephone pit and officers quarters. Fritz had named this strong point 'Villa Anna' and we soon cleared the position of debris and started to erect defensive walls of sand bags. On the 21st we had our first 5.9" which killed Bdr Kennerley and blew to fragments Gnr Beaumont. We found a portion of a leg 100yds away and pieces of his clothing covered acres of ground. Awful stench from rotten stuff in and around the position.

**On 21st/22nd I was on duty from 22-30 to 02-30 Fritz started to gas us at 23-00 and continued the caper until 02-00. Frank Heys relieved me at 02-35. At 03-30 shell hit corner of telephone pit killing Heys and Lt Collins, both in pit, and severely wounding the Major, Lt Worth, Bdr Lovall and Sigmn Reid. Stunt started at 4am. Lt Jones, Howard and self sorted out the mess. Up to the elbows in blood and felt a bit 'done up' by breakfast.**

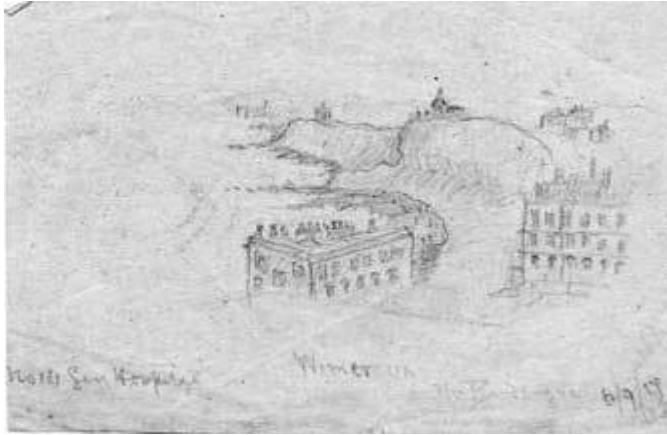


Poperinghe 26th August 1917

Arrived hospital. High temperature and horrible dreams of various messes up the line. What a treat to be able to lie out full length on a bed of wire netting. Diet condensed milk and water 3 times a day. August 27th loaded up in Red Cross motor and taken to clearing station and then to No 12 CCS Proven. Carried about on stretcher as though I was a serious case. Finally passed on to No 10 ward Medical. Fritz bombed locality during the night.

Proven 28th August 1917

Arrived No 12 CCS. What a treat: Double marquee chrome lined and electric light. Stretcher beds on trestles. Canadian nurse. Sponge down and back to bed once more. Splendid camp near railway. Food good. Sardines or ham for breakfast. Beef and veg for dinner followed by rice pudding. Tea; jam, jellies and tinned fruit. Supper cheese and cocoa. Bread and butter each meal. Up 2nd Sept and started to make myself useful. Barber for the ward. West Indian's hair some stuff to cut. Snowball a great case for posy and tales of Jamaica. Made beds and assisted in pantry.



Wimereux 5th September 1917

Red Cross train from Proven. Motor from train to hospital (14 General). Raining. Had vapour bath and supper then bed No 12 ward, which in peace time was the servants quarters over the garage of Hotel Splendid near the Casino. Two mins from beach. Lovely view from ward window of sea and coast up to Cap Gris Nez. Camp on cliff.

Boulogne 12th September 1917

Arrived by motor from Wimereux(5k) No.1 Con camp(2k from Boulogne). Camp of marquees surrounded by gardens. Met Baxter. Had to return to Wimereux on foot with three others for cap comforters. What a gag. Took road along cliffs and returned via 53 Cen hospital so that Canada could get his clobber.

Sept 13th route march into Boulogne headed by pipers. French villagers show great admiration for Scotch legs. Sept 14th transferred to Base details over the road. Visited column of the Grand Army and saw dear old Blighty from the top also Boulogne harbour and portion of the French fleet. Splendid view of surrounding country. Detailed for 24hr stick guard at Coppins leave billets. What excitement among troops going on leave. Splendid rations. Had a pass so ran around the town viewing the shops. Few good antique shops.





Harfleur 16th September 1917

Arrived Horse truck from Boulogne. Met Abbey who is PB and on a soft job in Sgts mess. Saw Gleeson and Routledge still on staff jobs. Met Towle in YMCA and Davis and Summerfield of D/103. Baxter marked 'TB'. Had the usual old stunts in the buzzer room and on hill flag drill, helio, lamp, large and small flag and disc sending and reading. No gyms. Church at cinema as usual. Large Blighty drafts come in. Assisted in sorting them out. Hear that Storer has been killed. Warned for draft 27th parade 01-30. Usual dreary tramp down to Havre station. We are a party of two, Cpl Pearson and self. Left at 10-30 in well packed horse truck. Spent most of following day viewing country from buffers. Raided several orchards en route. Rouen, Abbeville, Calais

Hazebrouk 28th September 1917

Arrived via horse truck from Le Havre. Billeted in convent for night. Station full of Bosche prisoners. Australians busy collecting souvenirs in exchange for fags. Fair sized town. Half station missing owing to bomb.

Abelee 29th September 1917

Arrived per civilian train from Hazebrouk. Billeted Div rest camp. Fritz busy during night. Met Taffy Lewis returning from leave. Local estaminets busy. Small village. Very hot and dusty marching. Tramped to La Clytte to WL.

La Clytte 30th September 1917

Arrived, tramped from Abelee (9k) Wagon Lines Fritz bombs frequently also shells by long range gun. Hit on right shoulder blade by machinegun bullets whilst laid down in bivouac. Graze and bruise only.

Took 3 teams and wagon up to position on **2nd Oct**. Not a bad journey but had to nip through Zillebeke. 4th Oct had to go sick with diarrhoea.



Oct 6th i/c team down to ordnance with gun for repairs.

Oct 7th i/c mess cart down to position. Decent trip, road blown up in several places. Heavy rain. All lads at position suffering from gas (loss of voice and blistering).

Oct 9th saw Logan returned to 'C' battery. Wange Wilkinson posted to 'A' battery. Hear we have taken last ridge and 3000 prisoners. Heavy gunfire all night. One of the best Sgt Last killed whilst i/c teams. Baldwin killed by shrapnel whilst on SOS stunt. Brass bands taking troops up the road to the front line - poor devils. Noticed 21 sausages up today and shoals of planes. Good observation.

Oct 13th i/c wagon up to position. Quiet until we reached Zillebeke. Decided to dash for it. Road strewn with men and horses. Road blown up and our lead driver and his pair of horses dropped in the shell hole. Shells bursting all around, Gave order to abandon wagon and clear. Saw lads all get away safely then gave Jack his head and plenty of spur. We both cleared that bit of Hell in great style and without a scratch. Reported and relieved Haggis who returned with Jack. Later in afternoon all ordered to return to WL. As Fritz was still shelling Bolton and I succeeded in getting clear. Owing to an overdose of rum succeeded in falling into umpteen shell holes none of which was dry.

15th October 1917

WL bombed 4 killed 3 wounded next line. Attended Benediction along with Garibaldi. Beautiful service but windows rattled by bursting bombs. WL moved to near windmill. Moved into action at Zillebeke on 18th. Of course all the ....(unfinished)

Zillebeke 18th October 1917

Arrived on foot from La Clytte. Rudkin House hot shop. Amongst heavies. Billeted in old support sap. Stinking, lousy, muddy and crowded. Had to make wide detour to avoid shelling. Kits and rations dumped near station. Wires difficult to maintain. Trench waders issued.

On 20th Fritz gave us a continual bumping with 4.2" and 5.9' all day. Wooden track near No 1 gun blocked up with GS wagon, limbers and teams and a few drivers. 22nd Lines cut to blazes.

On 23rd orders to leave position on 24th. Fritz busy strafing Knoll Road wooden track filled with transport when he opened out. I had a fine view from Rudkin House. First salvo caught motor lorries which blazed fiercely. Teams were bowled over and I could hear horses screaming though nearly a mile away. Fritz gave the track a proper peppering scattering men and horses. Great sight but awful. Instructed to be ready to leave position 24th for rest. Handed over the two guns left (out of 6) to Australians. Fritz very quiet until we were leaving position. Just cleared Zillebeke by five minutes when Fritz cut loose. Had a look round the 'Salient' which I hope will be my last. Bricks and mortar flying and dumps blazing. Picked up GS wagon at Shrapnel corner

La Clytte 24th October 1917

Arrived from position per GS wagon and foot. Informed that we are on the move on the 25th out of action. Moved out at 09-30 on an old crock of a nag. Blind in one eye, off fore knee kicked to bits and more than weak on near front leg.

Renalhurst 25th October 1917

Arrived column of route at new horse lines near windmill. Billeted in tents and informed that Fritz bombs every night and that Aussies had 19 killed and injured here. On 25th Fritz gave us a welcome at 22-30. One burst in turnip field, four duds and one burst which flattened lath and plaster estaminet. Two Belgians wounded. Our tent rocked like a ship at sea.

27th visited YMCA cinema moved into wooden huts near windmill. One of Fritz's dud bombs dropped 12 feet away. Church service near hole. Heavy bombardment all day.

28th Stand to. All sorts of rumours floating about. Off to Salonika, Egypt, Italy, Ireland, Russia and Heaven Knows where else. Suppose we will get somewhere. Brought 5 guns from Dickebusche so it looks like business. Fritz over but some distance away. Some fight at HQ started by Haggis -rum issue stopped as a consequence.

29th marking time for orders. Damned nuisance can't get any mail off.

30th NCO Gun Park guard 24hrs. Fritz was busy bombing the whole district. Pop was having whole issues of bombs and shelling from long range gun.

8th November Fritz pays us another visit after a few nights rest. 4 Gothas down during morning very wet again.

Godwaerswelde 9th November 1917

Arrived column of route from Renalhurst. Wet day otherwise not bad march. Rode 'remount 80'. Not a bad ride but shied at all steam traffic. Drawn up in sidings. Soon entrained. Very little trouble with horses. Centre section 'B' attached to ditto 'A' for journey. Left noon 8 horses and 2 drivers per truck. Gunners 17 per truck. Passed through Abbeville, Amiens, St. Denis, Chantilly (saw racecourse), Paris.

November 10th still moving. Still raining and the 'Gay' city looked miserable.' Mesmin (stopped for half hour at big French hospital had coffee and tea and Bully and biscuits. English Red Cross nurses issued coffee. St Julien, D'Avallon et D'Epinac, Senesy le G Macon (stopped for water etc). Many troop trains of French en route same direction. Romanche, St Germain, Lyons (this is a splendid town and station), Serzin, Vetesse, Vienne, Vaugris, Valence, Marseilles, St Marcel, Aubagne, Bandol (beautiful town on bay in Med), Toulon, La Farades, Monaco, Nice.

Ventimiglia 13th November 1917

Arrived 02-30. Detrained and marched column of route to wagon lines next to prom. Hedged around by tree ferns. Had a good reception from Italians had a run round town in evening with De Nigris. Enjoyable time.

14th November 1917

Marched off 07-00 column of route and followed road along coastline of Med. Scenery 'tres bien'. Had enormous receptions as we passed through villages and towns. Pelted and decorated with roses, carnations, chrysanthus and violets. Palm leaves were strew on roads and every house displayed flags of the Allies. Hundreds of people lined the route and gave us tomatoes, apple, limes, lemons, oranges and cigarettes, postcards, charms and Vin Rouge. Scenery beyond description. Rested for evening at Riva Ligure. Had a dip in the Med. Butterflies plentiful. Flowers abundant. Air balmy. Sea a wonderful blue. Buildings fine. Patrol boat and torpedo boat of Italian navy in bay. Number of Austrian prisoners working in the locality

15h November 1917

Column of route again still following coastline. en route gave us figs, lemons, apples, Vin Blanc, oranges. Streets decorated. Flowers strewn upon streets. Guard Alpini turned out and gave 'present arms'. Alpini band played as we marched by. Billeted in big school at Oneglia. San Remo was the big city we passed through prior to Oneglia, it was IT.

17th November 1917

Arrived Allasio. Billeted in monastery. On picket. Horselines on shore. Beautiful town.

18th November 1917

Column of route. Passed through a number of villages and towns by the coast. At Albegiga had the usual reception, pelted with flowers, presented with postcards, cigars, cigarettes, matches, wines, tomatoes, figs etc. Had a decent swim in the sea. Walked through town in evening. We have at last discovered that the Italians give with one hand and rob with the other. Men have lost kits, harness, coats, blankets and numerous other articles. Packs have been cut open and rifled. Oats disappear as if by magic. March continued. Usual fete by inhabitants of villages and towns. Road cut in face of precipice all the way. Exchanged greetings with the crew of an Italian destroyer 300ft below. Could have thrown orange on its deck. After long march arrived at Savona which had turned out en masse. Wagons run to railway sidings ready for loading up. Entrained and left Savona 23-59hrs tired out. Passed through Pavia, Codogno, Piadina. Enthusiastic reception by inhabitants. Usual gifts. Trains packed with refugees.

Mantova 20th November 1917

Arrived 23-00. Detrained and proceeded to wagon lines. Slept under the stars and had a good night. Covered with frost when awakened. Much colder climate.

21st November 1917

Column of route again. Country generally resembles France. Met bags of Italian troops etc coming down the line. Don't think much of them by their appearance. Arrived Lugano billeted over oxen which are extensively used for draught purposes.

22nd November 1917

On the road again by 07-00. Passed through several villages in which our infantry were resting. Notts & Derby, Y&L, Durhams etc. Met more Italian troops coming down. Weather very cold. Climbing higher all the time. Arrived Poino. Billeted in schools. Rations on the march from France have been poor, mostly bully, jam and biscuits. Bought bread occasionally which was fairly decent.

23rd November 1917

Column of route. Started 04-00. Sharp frost. Flat country still but hills in distance. Passed through villages and towns. Inhabitants now greet us with cold stares of curiosity. Numbers of refugees making their way back. Wagons loaded with their effects and drawn by oxen. Saw many teams of oxen ploughing etc. Slow work. Arrived Sossano. Billeted in open loft on straw. Not so bad. Mail up, great excitement. Tobacco and cigarettes very scarce. Italian tobacco rotten stuff generally.

24th November 1917

Column of route. Started 02-00. Sharp frost. Very long journey. Uninteresting country generally. Great numbers of Italian soldiers camped about also transport on roads. One feature of our long trek is the orders about clean boots, headchains and vehicles. Brigade order which took the biscuit "Halt. Dismount. Clean your boots" What a gaff. Arrived at Sindago. No billets so after a run around town sampling Vino, Marsala etc bedded down at side of limber in dense fog and had a good nights sleep. Loose horse pulled my overcoat off during the night but soon recovered it again. Expected to have a days rest on 25th as it was needed by both horses and men.

25th November 1917

10-00 hrs Orders to pack up immediately and get on the move again. Short journey and arrived at Tenere La Destra. Billeted in loft over what looks like municipal buildings. Geese on green. Reminds me of Ayton. Holiday from 13-30 to 16-15. Football match. People excited spectators. Can hear gunfire at times but must be some distance away.

26th November 1917

Same place. Days rest. Rugby match after dinner.

27th November 1917

Still resting. Football match on green in village in afternoon. Blanco Vino a great drink here 1lira 50 per litre. Bread forbidden to be sold to troops. Noticed beautiful beaten copper vessels in use by natives. Italian planes above. Sound exactly like Bosche planes. Haggis returned to duty. Hasler officers (Sparrow's) servant.

28th November 1917

Up at 04:00. Column of route 07-00. Long dreary journey crossed two pontoon bridges (Italian) passed through several villages and towns including Castro Franco with ruined city walls. Arrived WL 03-00. Billeted in loft.

29th November 1917

Had basin of milk, plantanti (made from maize). Near line. Bombs dropped. Cigarette issue, first for three weeks. What a treat after Italian tobacco.



30th November 1917

Lib's birthday. Same place. Arrange battery staff. Transferred to 'F' sub Sgt Smith. New horse '159', big black. Kit inspection. Italians had a beano in cow shed underneath, drinking rouge vino until 02-00. What an awful gabbling. All were drunk - from 3yrs of age up. No coal in this country. Olive trees used for fuel. Nearly all houses and farms have paintings of saints etc on outside walls.

1st December 1917

Had our first bread issue since leaving Renelhurst.

2nd December 1917

On road again passed through several villages and towns and by large Italian infantry camps. Arrived at WL in a vineyard behind a farm at the foot of the hills near line. Bivouacs in vineyard bedded down on vine leaves and maize stalks.

3rd December 1917

Montebelluna

4th December 1917

Came into action at last at a place near [Bosco](#), River Piave. What a change to the old place. We are on a high ridge with a 2Km river between us and Fritz who is on the mountains opposite. We can see his campfires on the mountains, his lamps signalling from peak to peak and searchlights on the river to prevent a surprise attack. Civilians are living between the battery and the front line which runs through Ciano. To walk to the OP is similar to a trip from Deganwy to Gt Orme's Head. We overlook a great number of towns and villages including S.Giovani, Vidor, Barche, Crocetta, Bosco, Ciano, and many more down the river towards Venezia(Venice). Had whizzbangs over during the day. Registered during afternoon.

6th December 1917

Fritz got wind up and from 09-00 to 17-00 peppered us with whizzbangs which were far too close for comfort. Spiteful old devil.

7th December 1917

Started to move to new position on right of old one. More cover and better situation.

8th December 1917

Registered two guns and moved to new quarters. Signal pit is now in an outhouse on a hill top. Can have a good fire and cook meals when we have anything to cook - food is not so good again. Fritz sent over a few 'lightweights' and of course 'C' battery clicked again. Had steak and chips for supper. Rum up.

9th December 1917

All guns registered. Spent all day digging in. Pay up. Drew first Italian pay. 50 liras.

10th December 1917

Quiet day. Most of day spent in digging out pit.

11th December 1917

Fritz has had a full day with artillery bumping front line all day. 'C' battery clicked again. Had a whizzbang through mess which killed their pay corporal.

12th December 1917

Rained all day. Rotten day for digging.

21st December 1917

Have had a variety of weather, one day snow two days rain. Have had sectional days and visual signalling. Have had a lot of humbug from officers and colonel. Tunnelling in rear of dug-out now 8ft in. Still sweating on mail and fags. Making Rolypoly pud for signallers mess "Tres Bien" "Bueno".

23rd December 1917

Saw Lt Campbell and squashed Director Mans job. Also the section stunts. Rutherford up before Major re. transmitting wrong order on shoot when Prince of Wales was at OP on 21st. Punishment - made linesman for three months. Barber and Goodman went down to Montebelluno shopping for Christmas brought back tinned sausages @ 2.50 Lires each. 5 Lires Chestnuts, ditto figs (which are very dear), ditto almond nuts, ditto apples and 30 Lires cigarettes. So looks like having a bit of Xmas even if we have had no mail up for weeks. Snow from yesterday still on ground. Towns on Piave looked peculiar in dull weather. Number of towns had fires in them through shelling.



24th December 1917

Mail up. Busy day preparing for Xmas.

25th December 1917

Snow deep. Grand day. Breakfast:- Quaker oats, sausage (tinned), Bacon, SM tea. Dinner:- Roast pork, potatoes, cabbage, plum pudding (tinned), Rum sauce, quart Italian beer. Tea:- Roly poly duff, jam, margarine, 3pkts Italian fags and 2pkts Gold Flake per man. Had a good day. Spent intervals yarning and sleeping. Taffy and Clements at OP. More mail up.

26th December 1917

Seven Gothas over early in day. One shot down near wagon lines (3 Austrians burned). Several planes down during day. Still heavy snow.

27th December 1917

Snow stopped all work

28th December 1917

Mail up. Snow still heavy. Glorious frosty nights.

29th December 1917

Slight thaw.

1st January 1918

Beautiful day of sunshine, sharp frost and deep snow. Erskine and I completed the metallic circuits on both OP lines. Saw Fritz plane come down after scrap in clouds struck mountainside and rolled down. Spent from 17-30 to 23-00 on top of mountain on look-out and to signal A' & 'B' batteries when rocket went up to let us know that the boys had crossed the Piave and required the assistance of our artillery. Cold job too. Fritz didn't show much fight and we were not called upon. Have heard since we captured 3 prisoners one was stupid so was drowned.

4th January 1918

All quiet as usual. Have had a fair amount of snow and frosts. Saw Brig. Gen King about the hills one day. 6" batteries bringing up ammo on sledges. Clem, Slim, Hunt and Rutherford on sigs course. Goodman goes on 15th inst on 2 months course. French still blasting on our left.

12th January 1918

Baths at Montebelluno. Decent town and plenty of civilians about. Canteen opened thank God. Tested lateral battery lines. Orders forbidding destruction of houses for firewood .

14th January 1918

Grand visibility. See French batteries on top of mountains pelting away all day. Set up kitchen which was on its own. RGA fellows after struggling with horses on icy roads for hours chanting "Its a long, long trail awinding" at midnight. Sounded well in the valley.

17th January 1918

Have just heard reason for chanting: RGA's knocked-out four Austrian batteries so have avenged their five comrades now in the soldier's cemetery at Montebelluno. Have had 09-00 to 13-00 visual on top of Montello hills. Rather a cool job with lamp. Foggy at first.

19th January 1918

Spent some time with telescope watching Fritz on the mountains above Vidor

20th January 1918

Captured a spy at signal pit. What a pity the cinema man wasn't on the scene. Lts Mackenzie, Sparrow, Sgt Williams and myself were enjoying a few selections on the mess gramophone when a message came through "Suspected spy seen on this front today wearing uniform of officer DSO, MC and carrying Boche rifle" Ten minutes later the identical party came to the signal pit and enquired for the road to Bosco. Mac and Sparrow promised to show him the way and Mac picked up his revolver as he went out. The next second Sparrow snatched the rifle and Mac pinned the spy's arms. He was marched off to HQ where he was released on showing his passport. Mac was wild.

22nd January 1918

Fritz objects to us signalling from the hill top so gives us three rounds.

23rd January 1918

Down to WL for 8hrs for inoculation. Had a stroll round Montebelluno. Felt sick at night.

24th January 1918

Arm a little stiff bit not bad. Still a bit sick. Had a cycle run to Montebelluno with Cpl Howard for canteen stores. Beautiful day. Town busy, many civilians have returned.

1st. February 1918

Balloon down yesterday. Fritz clear away.

4th February 1918

Now we have a volcano on the front mountains over the Piave. The one on our left has died down to a wisp of smoke.

9th February 1918

Weather not so warm. Hear we are going out to rest soon. The eagle which has been over two or three times lately has not been seen for the past two days. Fritz has had a rather rough time but takes it in good part. Sgt Yates has come to take charge of signals.

10th February 1918

Had day at OP and an instructional shoot of eight rounds on my own 3 targets out of the eight shots. House on Piave bank. Range 5375 16°30' L of zero AS 2°10' dep LX RGN Cordite P.

11thFebruary 1918

Had a good close view of two eagles over position. They were fine birds. Hunt proceeded on leave taking with him some souvenirs.

13th February 1918

Still foggy but no rain. Left section have gone to Biadene WL and relieving section have come in. We are going out to rest for, it is said, one month 5 kilos beyond Montebelluno 41st Div are relieving. Lt Campbell has gone on gunnery course, Lt Graham transferred to trench mortars. Lt Davis is attached to 'A' Battery

14th February 1918

Centre section are going out to rest camp tonight. Left front line for WL Biadene

15th February 1918

Left WL for Busta small village 4 Km from Montebelluna.

18th February 1918

Proceeded to Caselle for signalling course. 12 men per battery. Took rations up to 20th. Had some difficulty with cooks about rations. Billeted over estaminet. Decent drill ground. Bread, fruit, eggs and chocolate not to mention wines galore. Lessons of the usual style.

Fritz over 18th and 19th.

23rd February 1918

Much warmer today. At night saw enormous fires up on mountains towards Mt Grappa. Interpreter says French are burning the woods etc. Distinctly felt a hot breeze blowing from the direction of the fires which are 15 km away



24th February 1918

Glorious day. Church parade 09-00 marched to 'C' battery WL for service. Rather nice position. Foothills crowned with trees and surmounted with the usual church. Behind the foothills, mountains occupied by French who had a terrific bombardment yesterday. Heard that the French captured many prisoners. Fires still burning and immense column of smoke rising vertically in almost still air. Bees are swarming just below my window. Hear that we're are going back to our old position on Montello hills opposite Vidor next week. 41st Div is reported to be returning to France - poor beggars.

25th February 1918

School closed 12-00 returned to WL per GS . Loaded up signal cart ready for moving off tomorrow. Saw a balloon of ours come down in flames about 16-00 direction of Montebelluno Hear we are going into same position we came out of. Hope so anyway. Right section go in first Jock Elder only one to go on leave this weekend. Hamilton who has just returned says what a case it is to get good food in Blighty.

26th February 1918

En route for Biadene WL passed thro Bisio and Montebelluna

27th February 1918

In action again, same place. Came up with RX. Fritz met us with 6" - 12" shells on Strada 18. Thought we had clicked first one. Many 12" holes round our district. After 'heavies' who had one in their second position. CX and QX came up. Detached gun, 'C' sub take up forward position bottom Strada 16. Lateral lines to 'A' & 'C' batteries "DG". Ours good position.

2nd March 1918

Sgt Yates returns to 'D' battery. In charge once more. Fritz chases me up Strada 16 and nearly bags a general and staff. 'DG' wire cutting satisfactory shoots. Still on harrassing fire stunts. 6" push 800 into Rivalti which is a mass of flames canopied by smoke. Harrassing fire each night up to 03-00.

Duties for March 5, 1918.

BATTERY.	A.M.	P.M.
Ensigns	10 to 2 and	10 to 2
Bdr Spies	2 to 6	2 to 6
Lewis	6 to 10	6 to 10

DAY OP  
 Clements, (as intended)

Luncheon for day.  
 Bdr Spies, To patrol OP lines etc

SOS OP  
 Walker and McNeill (dusk to dawn)

Visual Signalling  
 Rutherford 5 to 6 PM  
 Lamp on "B.V." Station.

~~Bdr Spies~~  
 1/2

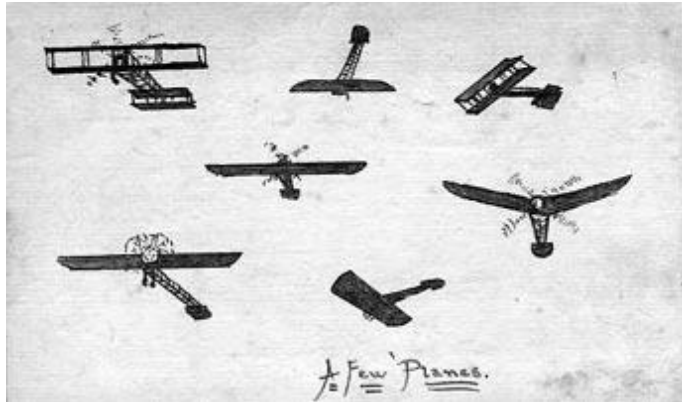
ORDERS FOR BATTERY SIGNALLERS

Signallers.					
No.	Name			Grade	
1658	Y	2	Bar	Squires	F
1323	3	3		Melville	II
1192	2	3		Nills	B
2019	2	4		Reed	B
3163	0	5		Barker	C
2223	7	7		Rutherford	II
9660	8			Griffin	F
2215	6	8		Bears	F
2272	4	2		Williams	B
1213	6			Lewis	E
1666	0	6		Forsyth	E
2117	6	0		Patterson	E
1954	1	6		Goodman	A
9211	2	0		Hunt	C
Signal etc					
9211	2	0		Hunt	C Retired.
1529	4	7		Clements	A
1484	1	6		Goodman	A Retired

ROLL CALL 5 March 1918

9th March 1918

Signal Yeats at HQs Montello hills to qualify for wearing crossed flags. Fritz served out a few whizzbangs over on the right during tests. His artillery activity has increased a little. Strafes the road during the night.



10th March 1918

Fritz planes over a few times usually squadrons of seven at a time. Good visibility Many butterflies and bees out today. Good hot day so washed my underclothing. Packed up some signal stores ready for leaving. Rumour says we are for Mt Grappa. Our planes active during night of 10/11th

12th March 1918

Left gun lines late in evening relieved by Italians. Interested in their detachments in action. No discipline whatever.

13th March 1918

Wagon lines packing up ready for march

14th March 1918

Reveille 05-00. Marched Div order 07-00 via Montebelluno, Castel Franco to WL slept in GS wagon for night

15th March 1918

Reveille 04-00. Moved off 07-00 passed through number of villages. Strong defences being made all the way. MG pits at intervals along the road. Bridges ready for blowing up. Trenches and wire all over the place. Arr WL 15.-00 after 'water and feed' dinner up. Parade again at 16-00. Tea up 17-30. Very cold wind all day from mountains. Slept in barn with 'C'sub. Robbie had a dead young rabbit. Some games. Italians in village had mandolin and songs in vino shop. In kip by 21-00.

16th March 1918

Reveille 07-00. Beautiful day. Cleaning appointments; stables, signal gear etc. Cpl Currie goes on leave. Castel Franco and Citadelle are beautiful old cities surrounded by high brick walls and towers. Beautiful old streets within the walls. River runs round outside like a moat. Visited Vicenza, had pass for afternoon. Grand old city in true Italian style, narrow streets, colonades, piazzas. Disgusted with sanitary arrangements even worse than villages. Brothels abound.

20th March 1918

Visited small village near WL.

22nd March 1918

Warned to proceed up line. Left WL 21-30 for gun position. One gun on motor lorry and another gun trailing. 3 cars loaded with baggage stores and detachments etc. Climbed Mt Grappa to Asiago plateau, which must be the top of the earth. Entered zone of snow and pine forests. Beautiful scenery by moonlight. Roads good but all have hairpin bends one after the other. Italians and French in wooden huts. Arrive in position at 05-00. Deep snow drift 3' to 5' deep. Issued with alpenstocks and spikes for boots. Guns had to be manhandled up tremendous hill through snow and pine forest. Position beautiful beyond words. All billets built of wood and trees. Log huts true Canadian backwood style. Splendid strong gun pits. Italians helped us pull up guns. Took nearly 100 men to get guns up and it was hard graft. Italians and ourselves have glorious mix-up on lines of communication.

23rd March 1918

Begin to sort out a bit.

24th March 1918

Worse muddle than before. No rations and box-up with lines. Beautiful bit of country Rocks, Caves moss and fern covered. Glorious pines and a variety of interesting animal life. Battery OP on top of pine tree 200ft high. Crows nest style. Rotten rations and no signs of mail coming or going. Fritz has seven planes over and shells lightly.

25th March 1918

Rations still rotten. Fritz scatters a block of traffic on road. Few killed and injured Mix up gradually being sorted out. We have taken over today.

3rd April 1918

Fritz does a bit of bumping with whizzbangs. B/102 clicks and has 3 sigs knocked out. One died at dressing station.

4th April 1918

Bit warmer. Therm 35. Birds singing in forest like a spring day. Fritz drops a few more on B/103 without result.

20th April 1918

Up on Mt Pau. Recce.

22nd April 1918

Granezza. Down towards plains then to summit of Mt Porco. Heavy snow.

23rd April 1918

Hear we are going out for rest to plains somewhere near Vicenza

25th April 1918

After long tour of front line left position per motor transport Thiene arriving there 1700. Had a feed at YMCA then walked down to Fara near Breganza to WL

26th April 1918

Left WL column of route walking. Arrived at bivouac planted in mud. What a change from Arctic regions to plains where it is springtime. Raining but warm. Thiene on our right. It is a very decent town with a fair amount of good shops. Arrived at rest billet which is a silk factory in Montecchio Maggiore. Good villages about here and plenty of methods of spending liras. Course at Bde HQ command.

1st May 1918

Instructor of DAC at Bde school. 1st parade 07-00 to 12-30 then 14-00 to 16-30

8th May 1918

Leave to Rome. Left MM 07-00. Tram from billet to Vicenza. Walked through town. Grand morning. 09-00 got a lift on Red Cross car to Padua. Had refreshments in station square. Train left Padua which is splendid old town for Bologna. 12-30. Squeezed in with Italian troops. Passed through Montelici. Beautiful village at foot of hills surmounted with castle and poplar trees. Revago a rather large old town in the plain. Passed Paviola arrived Bologna 16-00. Had a walk up the main street of this fine city. Beautiful buildings and splendid shops. Evidently we were strange to the people who made our tour somewhat embarrassing by their curious stares. Had a decent meal Risoeverdura, Arrosto rabbit and peas with lemon bread and vino blanco and fruit. Cost us 4.20l each. On return to street MP was after us as we should have reported to RT0 before going into town. After a lecture he let us on our way again. Left Bologna, 19-30.

9th May 1918

Arrived Rome 09-00

17th May 1918

Left Rome 14-00

18th May 1918

Arrived Montecchio Maggiore 17-30.

19th May 1918

Left column of route for Thiene

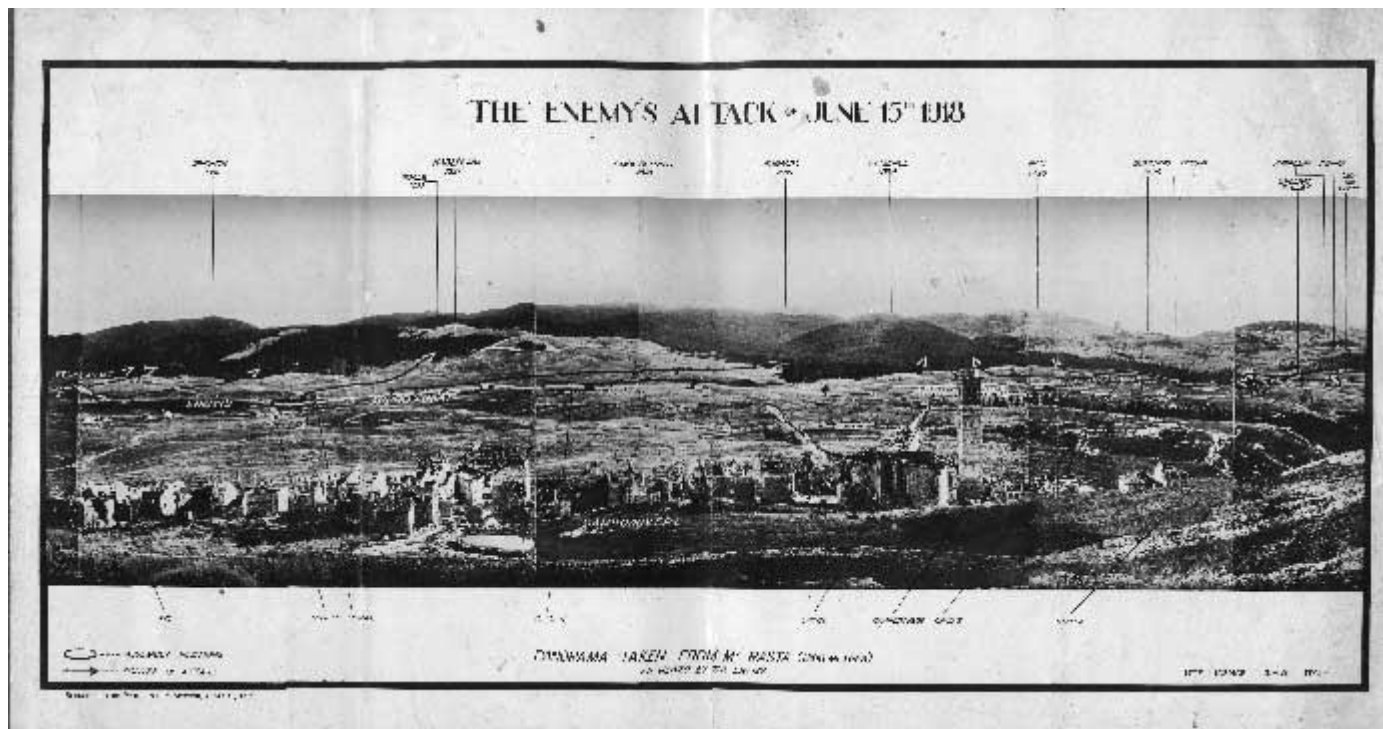
20th May 1918

Fara



21st May 1918  
M Bruscon

15th/16th June 1918  
Fritz opened up a terrific bombardment we had a hell of a time for 6 hours



*Intelligence photograph of the route of Austrian attack at Asiago where Bert won his Military Medal - Larger version can be downloaded [here](#) (850Kb)*

Thurs 19.6.1916

My dearest wife and children

Just a short note to let you know that I am quite well again. My feet, the hands, are healing up nicely now. We are exceptionally busy just now as no doubt you will notice by the papers. The first storm was a bit rough not to say exciting, but the whole over the road was a bit rough and had an equally rough passage. I wrote some letters and lost them in the mix up but after some days in two days recovered them and enclosed in fresh envelopes. Hope you have received some the usual in camp was lucky. One of our lads had a lily place on his arm which will give him a week or less down below. His stink pots were not too bad. Will keep you in 'Whisper Gang' each day so don't get excited. It's early. Hope you are all well. Will write more in future days. I have hope when that they are all well. No paper received so far. Kiss the kiddies for me. Heaps of love and kisses from your loving husband  
Bert

Got the year wrong, but this was written just after

*the Battle of Asiago.*

26th June 1918

Decorated by Gen Babington with Military Medal.

Press cutting from The Derby Evening Telegraph -  
June 1918

### THE ROLL OF HONOUR

#### DERBY BOMBARDIER WINS MILITARY MEDAL

Bombardier Charles Bertram Spires of the R.F.A. has been awarded the Military Medal for gallantry in the field in Italy. The report states that "On the 15th of June 1918, this NCO was in charge of the Battery signallers. During an intense bombardment the telephone dugout had a direct hit and all wires were destroyed. He immediately ran out a new line to group headquarters under extremely heavy fire, and it was entirely due to his gallantry that communications with group headquarters was re-established." His home address is 28 Silverhill Road. He joined the Army on September 7th 1916, was drafted to France in February 1917 and then to Italy in November last year. Prior to enlistment he was assistant superintendent of the Britannic Assurance Co.



## Narberth War Memorial

*Narberth is a busy market town, just off the main A40 from Carmarthen to Haverfordwest, inside the Pembrokeshire Border. The Town has a long history, and was even mentioned in the Mabinogion, and during both of the World Wars of the Twentieth Century saw many of her sons leave for war, many never to return. The War Memorial is situated at the top of Market Street, on the one way system that runs through the Town Centre. Many thanks are due to Les Nixon for kindly supplying photos of the War Memorial, and to Narberth Museum for granting permission to use the photos of Elwyn Davies and William Bowen Stephens.*



Arthur Irving, Driver, 5526, Royal Field Artillery. Arthur was the Son of John and Mary Irving, of Church St., Narberth, and enlisted at Haverfordwest into the Royal Field Artillery, where he served in their "C" Battery, 88th Brigade. The 88th Brigade served with the 19th (Western) Division, and crossed to France during July, 1915. The Division fought in most of the major actions of the war from here on. They fought during the Battle of Loos, and then moved south to the Somme, where they captured La Boisselle. They fought through most of the Somme Battles of 1916 before being moved to Ypres, where they fought at the Battle of Messines, which was the opening phase of Third Ypres, or Passchendaele, then at the Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcappelle and at Passchendaele Village itself. After terrible casualties, they moved to a 'quieter' area east of Bapaume, but were caught there during the opening of the German Spring Offensive of the 21st March, 1918 and were decimated during the ensuing Battles of St. Quentin and Bapaume. They were removed from the area, and moved north again to Ypres, where they again came under heavy attack, during the Battles of Messines, Bailleul and Kemmel. By now the Divisional casualties were severe, and they were moved south to the Aisne, in another 'quiet' sector, but they were again caught up in the action, during the Battle of the Aisne, where Arthur was wounded. He Died of Wounds on the 5th June 1918 aged 32, and is buried at Marfaux British Cemetery.

## **The General.**

"Good-morning; good-morning!" the General said  
When we met him last week on our way to the line.  
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead,  
And we're cursing his staff for incompetent swine.  
"He's a cheery old card," grunted Harry to Jack  
As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.

But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

**Siegfried Sassoon.**

David Brown July 2017