

No. 18.

Dec. 13rd 1916.

Jan 26th 1917.

With Mining Platoon.

Amin, Godebert
Charles Bar.

Wednesday

13th Dec.

This book is being commenced under remarkable different circumstances to the other dozen or so diaries I have already completed. As an officer in His Majesty's army I will not take the liberty of writing in the same unrestrained manner; maybe I will not be able, or rather, have occasion to do so as my position is now so changed. I do not wander about in the same leisurely way or have the opportunity of getting into casual conversation with all and sundry, and again my present company will probably see things from an entirely different stand point from the ranks, but so far, in this respect I have not noticed any great difference.

officers have their petty grievances & troubles as does the privates, and many of them are working under the same imaginary dog.

To-day I met an awful grumbler, he seems to have the best knowledge of war matters than any I all; to hear him talk; but alas, he only has one star up and a mournful story of his treatment &c. I have met some 20 officers of varying ranks and I fear that my only trouble in living up to and above many will be my backwardness at cards, for the rest of the game I only want a little experience, to be up with them.

There seems to be an awful feeling of depression concerning the state of the war just now. Men who were confident we

were winning easily are now shaking their heads and asking one another "will we be in the final peace conference at all, or will Germany have it all their own way. There is no doubt that we have paid heavily for our successes on the Somme and now that the enemy have given us a display of their power in overcoming Roumanie with such rapidity and apparent ease our chances look very gloomy indeed.

The Australian people have shown clearly that they are sick of the whole business and now that the English people are being pinched there is an inclination to squeak right through Great Britain, while France is nearly depleted of man power and there is clearly something looking over in the

Russian area. Yes, we Allies
are fast weakening and show
~~the~~ signs of almost impossible
attempts at organisation.

There are gaps right through our
service. Gaps that make one
stop and glare in dazed
wonderment. There are days
and days wasted ~~xxxx~~ waiting
for materials. For instance,

here we are with a party of
80 + 3 officers and this fourth
day that we have been sitting
on the job, besides five days
arrangement before we came
out and the working have
not yet been surveyed nor
have we one set of timber to
commence operations with.

Everybody complains of the same
thing, and nobody bothers
much as it "belongs to the

other department". So we
sit around unconcerned and
wait, wait, wait:— We
will ever remain waiting too,
I suppose. I seem to have
been doing nothing else since
1914.

Now as for
the Central Powers they know
their war game like a good
bridge player knows his cards
and the actual value thereof, so
that they prosecute the war
to meet the strength of the
cards and anticipate every
move of the allied cards as is
so easy to a bridge player.

But admitting all this greater
knowledge and superiority, they
have suffered tremendous losses,
Losses not nearly as great
in actual numbers as our own
but losses nevertheless that

make them a weakened and
a fast failing army. Germany's
latest move in drawing upon
every available source for men
shows clearly that there is a
shortage of man power. The
Austrians have been very badly
knocked about and would be
easily overcome without the
wonderful power of Germany.

So it is the Germans that we
have got to beat first. I
believe one thoroughly organised
push would break them down
too; but to move an inch
at a time as we are now
doing leaves us without a chance
of success as our losses are
too heavy and the position we
take to batter for the
protection of our forces from
the devastating fire of the enemy

Then our communications are
so badly hampered that our
men have to suffer not only
from exposure but lack of
food stuff as well, and there
are no comfortable billets for
the men to rest in when
out of the line unless they
are taken 12 to 30 miles
back: -

On the other
hand we Germans can make
new and solid positions to
fall back upon and these
roads and railways are
not injured seriously, while
ours have entirely disappeared.

No, we will hardly beat
Germany by our present methods
the cost is too high and if we
just hang on and wait our
merchant shipping will be all
sunk by sub-marines or

the allies must pull themselves together and make a dash for liberty and success. But no... I expect them simply to hang on and wait and keep waiting with the persistency that has made the British station just what it is. Although the honours of war will go to the allies there will be no spoils for the victors, in fact I can't see that there is going to be any victors at all it is like a dog fight in which both contestants are weakened to explain physical and financial ruined too weak to continue the battle and at the same time neither is strong enough to move ahead to grasp the spoils of victory. Stalemate"

Thursday

Dec 14th.

Our mining job is still going in a very half-hearted way owing to lack of timber, and we dare not cut in far into the chalk without it. There have been several Staff Officers down and about lately, but it seems that even they cannot hasten along the materials for the job.

Just saw last of the week in good style to-day so that we can commence our vertical shaft almost at once to a depth of 40 ft.

Following upon the remarks of yesterday news comes through that Germany has put forward "Peace Proposals" through several different neutral sources, but these

proposals seem to be based upon a Germany victory in so much as they hold onto Belgium. Giving back the whole of the French territory. This is not a serious sign at all just the effect of weakness that all nations concerned are feeling, and a general desire for peace which the whole world are craving and praying for. Anyhow it is a good start and being the thin edge of the wedge it may open out onto something worth stopping the war to the satisfaction of all that are left.

Friday

Dec 15th

Weather conditions don't so much matter now-a-days as they is very little necessity for me to go out into the open working as our men are underground.

But anyhow, the weather is most damnable for those poor devils in the trenches, or working in the open. There is no light for observation so things are rather quiet in regards to gun fire.

We have taken our bearing of the levels and all is ready for going right ahead only for the lack of timber. Timber we can't get at all, and Fuel Issues has been ringing up regularly and being promised from day to day. We have

as usual played bridge after tea for 1 1/2 hours. I hate to think of the few valuable hours I have spent playing cards (without betting) during the past 5 days and nights.

To night the conversation drifted between two officers 11th & 4th Battalions on to their attacks and the awful mistakes that occur. Whole Battalions get lost out in "no man's land" and shoot one another. ^{Patrols} ~~Patrols~~ getting into ^{bombing} ~~bombing~~ range of one another and killing their own men.

One said that the 5th Division were positively slaughtered at Flanders not only were they hit down by the Jumps on either side but they failed to get orders and went on to their death, some

9,000 Australian casualties were reported and nothing gained whereas the charge was a glorious success and would have broken the German line to hell had there been any support for the men; but no, they were the only Division to attack and away they went with great dash only to meet the concentrated fire of the German for miles around. They say it is positively the worst mistake since the war started and these mistakes have been many and gigantic.

The stories of these officers would have been humorous were it not for the seriousness and the loss of life entailed. Yet we did laugh. We laughed when the story of the wounded German being buried alive

was told. I fellow came along
and saw the earth moving
as it was being thrown out of
a trench. The sergeant's attention
was drawn to it, and he
coolly remarked. Yes, Sir, I
know there's a German ~~to~~
under there, but we didn't
bother about them."

There was a tin of petrol
caught alight last night inside
our cellar residence, there were
a dozen men about and strong
to say every one run out and let
it burn. I came out and
with two men kept the woodwork
from burning until the spirit
burnt itself out. The officers who
got away themselves (there were
bombs and cartridges in the corner)
said that it is ~~astounding~~ astounding
how our soldiers so readily run away
from danger nowadays!

Saturday

Dec. 16th

The job is moving along
now that the timber is at hand.
Mining is splendid work in this
cold frosty weather and the men
seem to delight in being down
under ground, it is so warm or
easy to keep warm.

In conversation with Genl. Passie
to-night he holds strongly to
the British system of operation &
shows that by our present
Somme methods we can so
weaken the Germans that
a big attack in the coming
Spring would about break
the Germans all to pieces.
I might agree with him too
if I knew the strength of the
British reserves. He says we
have millions of men: I don't know

Sunday

Dec. 17th

A terribly dull and an awfully frosty day. We had a rifle inspection to-day and I felt rather an outcast as well as an impostor not to have taken one of the three sections and remained their rifles.

But now that I have seen the procedure and understand the orders &c. I will in future be able to hold my own.

The ups and downs of our ideas of our military matters is so strange and liable to rapid fluctuation. The men who were last week asking themselves whether we would lose the war or not, are to-day gladly declaring a victory, taking the German peace terms as a sign of their

weakness and a good chance of the damn business being over before long. I still sit stolidly on the fence waiting ever waiting; and by no means satisfied that the "terms" are a sign of weakness, certainly the German people, like ourselves, are desirous of peace, and they must be weakening also, but we will just have to sit tight ^{and} wait, wait & byt waiting.

Pay-day drew 17-18-4 - rig. - 500 fms.

Monday

Dec 18th.

There is nothing exciting in our daily existence just now.

Fritz does drop an occasional shell around about, but we seem to be isolated, there is plenty of ammunition around yet I have not ventured 100 yards from our job so that I know nothing about goings on near by even.

More bridge playing to-day, for a frame a hundred too: but after 4 hours play there was only 41 point on our side.

A fellow officer to-day tells of how in the rush to dig a trench at Poziers it was necessary to throw a wounded man over the top of the half dug trench to take his chance. It was hard but had to be.

Tuesday

Dec. 19th 1916.

It is about the coldest night on record. This morning and all day the ground has been frozen hard; It was the first time that I heard the horses feet ringing as though on the hard street of London. The poor brutes slipped and skid about frightfully, more so as they have experienced nothing but mud for weeks on end.

It will be interesting now to see how the mules compare with the horses on the frozen tracks. personally I like the mules they take shorter steps and have a knack of recovering their footing quickly. It is the mules have clearly shown their superiority over the horses in rough work

under the conditions at the front line. Why we have not gone in for mules to a greater extent in Australia bothers me so they are vastly better than horses at hard and trying work.

This evening snow commenced to fall and later a better wind sprang up so that to-night is a fair snow. It is said that when the ground freezes hard and deep there will be further attacking on our front.

This, I suppose, is alright but then the trouble arises in the fact that the shells will now break on the surface and scatter broadcast whereas they would bury themselves in the mud and hurt nobody.

Our building is lousy the men

complain. To-day the men were discussing what they should do with the Kaiser when they got him. The punishment and the language wherein expressed are unwritable; but the fellow who took my eye came out with these words intermingled with many adjectives. Where we get the — we should put a chatty (lousy) shirt on him and cut his two hands off.

The rum issue last night was a little short; to-day when down below a fellow let a plank fall on himself; in sympathy with him I observed 'Damn bad luck, boy'. He replied yes my luck is dead out lately. I played bridge for my rum issue against another chap last night, and lost.

Wednesday

Dec 20th

The sun has not shone, nor has the atmosphere been clear enough for observation of any kind for some days and days.

This morning, with the results of last night's fall of snow still upon the hard frozen ground, the sun shone weakly but faintly in the East, there were signs of a brilliant day I felt overjoyed at the prospect of a walk out. On coming up from a look around the dugouts there was a sky full of aeroplanes hovering around and fighting one another in a angle of the front. Their gun-fire could be plainly heard all around and big shells commenced to land nearby with a crouching burst. In a

moment I saw the fruits of a bright day; my jaws came together with a hard cynical snarl; to think that man had turned so fine a day into a butchery such as the early Romans, with their lowly form of civilisation, could never realise.

Dugouts and those half round houses were blown up men & other contents. The body of a traffic officer was thrown up 70ft into the air. The snow had just about disappeared by afternoon but still the sun shone faintly. At dusk all was quite again, and somehow or other I long for a dull foggy day to-morrow so that neither side can see; this casual shelling is too cold and it puts the wind up men that would laugh at them if

it simply rained shells when
in the front line trenches. Here
they are expected and you can
hear the shells from our own
guns travelling over head, these
bring forth consolation and cheer
as we know that our own
losses are avenged. Here with
only a scattered battery about
there is only the bursting of
German shells, the ~~retaliation~~
retaliation process is not noticed.

Two parcels to hand
to-day from K. Evans &
Mrs A A H Griffiths 45 Auburn St
Auburn, Melbourne. The latter lost
her husband at Gallipoli. I wrote
her. Both parcels were through
Griffith Bros. and were the best
I have seen of the kind. All
good eatable tinned stuff. I will
lose some of my parcels owing to change
of address I suppose.

Thursday. Dec. 21st.

A very quiet day to day. At
midday it rained and that means
a lower temperature, viz a thaw
and with a thaw comes mud &
slush, we would rather by far
see the frozen ground so as to
keep the feet dry.

We played bridge to-night again,
the only reason that I feel satisfied
to have this job to-morrow when
the 2nd Brigade take over from
us is to avoid having to play
cards I would much prefer
writing. We have played for 1/2
a game 100 three times, twice
the scores differed but a few points
once I won 3 francs and pocketed
5 or none & won the five, but
my play is very poor considering the
class of the other men. To-morrow

the 1st ^{Brigade} ~~Regiment~~ take the line being
the 1st Battalion. We do fatigue
work up to the front line or
something of the kind. I regret
or will regret if we don't go into
the line as I want to see
myself up with the next and best
of them. QuittWaller & Quitt Isaac
go into the trenches and by the
feeling and talk of them they
realise to the fullest extent
the danger of their undertaking
and take more jokingly than
seriously about it. They say
that raiding commanders which
Quitt Isaac is to be get either
Military Crosses or wooden crosses.
They, however, are not gloomy even
if they do feel inwardly concerned
which any human being must do.
There is much misery to be found as
well as death in the front or any

line nowadays. I have before
me a secret map of our trenches at
least our particular sector and the
names of them are good. The
number of trenches in this small
sector is remarkable. The names
appear on maps only why the names
are not posted on each trench and
sign boards erected beats me all
to bits. Men spend hours instead
of minutes going a message and
some get lost altogether.
Trench names:— Sweet H. Blue Alley
Fish Alley, Grove Avenue, Smoke
Tr. Pilgrim Way Chalk Lane
Cheese Road Pursuit Tr. Hilly Tr.
Grease Tr. Whale Tr. Grit Sufferer.
Beyond Tr. Cloudy Tr Stormy Tr.
Newsk Tr. Possum Reserve.
Pioneer Tr. Bulls Tr.
I will spend both times a New Year here
about I suppose.
I saw just before my major now looking
splendid

Friday

Dec 22nd 1916.

A day of much concern to the men of the 2nd & 4th Battal. of this "Mining party" as they move off into the line at once. The feeling that seems to come over one is akin to a gambler going out with his last pound to make good or die of hunger. Or a thirsty bushman making for the last despairing water hole in drought time.

Many times these men have gone into it and come out alright but like a man getting a run of heads in a two-up school, they can't go on indefinitely; fate must ~~xxxx~~ "recoil."

To night I have three 2nd Page officers here; in the morning I leave for new quarters.

A bright afternoon, and made tedious again by more strapping. Parcel from B. Blackland. Letters of cheer from Kute, Powell, Cousin Ade, Cennell, Bro. Bent.

Saturday

Dec 23rd.

This has been the windiest day on record. It has been blowing so strong that it is very difficult to keep on the subboard walks without being blown over into the thick mud.

With 21 men I changed over to Beerfay and have put up in Bow Huts, the finest style of thing and the most common sense thing I have seen in the British Army. It means that instead of having to sleep in wet dugouts and in the rain and mud the men rest comfortably in the half round huts about 15 ft. by 24 ft. housing up to 40 men. The Germans were remarkable lucky in the shelling the other day as two of these places were landed onto with heavy shells the huts disappeared at once, naturally; but to show how loud the effects were the huts 2 yards on either side were not injured. There has been heavy firing all to night.

Xmas Eve.
Longueval, Fles & Delville Wood

Sunday

Dec 24th

At 1.0'clock this morning I was sleeping contentedly when a messenger knocked and asked for Capt. Walker. On reading the message he referred it to me; it ran "The Mining Platoon will have breakfast at 6-45 a.m. and move off

at 7.30 reporting at 1st Aust. Brigade Hdqrs. with 24 hours rest."

Now, my men are sleeping in different places and it won't be daylight until 8.0'clock!! I sent ~~to~~ "runner" back with a note to my corporal; and after a whole lot of bother and bustling we set out along the road through Longueval in a depth of slush and mire.

There were shell holes in the middle of the road and as the road was under water there was no detouring

the pitfalls or possible chance of avoiding them. Two or a half miles of this slush and I reported in at Brigade Hdqrs. on the tick of 9.0'clock.

Staff Capt. Watson showed me two jobs in a tunnel, one an office chamber the other and the other a sleeping apartment.

I set the men to work and later went down to the Battalion camp and arranged for 60 pans of 'carton goods' for the boys, as we have nothing at all for Xmas dinner.

I fell in luckily with Joint Patterson & Lt. Ashurst of some Tunneling Co. who are working along here with 50 men. They could do but little in the way of sleeping accommodation for me but they welcomed me along to their little mess and fed me up jolly well indeed. I slept in a stuffy tunnel. The men are also in a tunnel.

Xmas Day

Monday

Dec. 25th.

At 8 o'clock last night a heavy artillery bombardment started from the German side. our guns replied vigorously for 40 minutes.

The result is that the 3rd & 4th Battalions men have been flowing through the Hospitals all day long.

Fritz seems to have done very well indeed for a Xmas Eve, only he will never have the satisfaction of knowing whether he has done any damage or not.

To-day has had flashes of sunshine running through it but for the most part it was cold showery & gloomy. There was plum pudding

for the men, the issue was 8 lbs. to 2, but I spent 60 francs on a whole lot of winter goods and it brought the pudding up to 1/2 lb a man

Around about work went on as usual but I was very reasonable with my men and worked them only a few hours, on a job of enlarging Brigade Hoop. which I hope will see the next 8 days over comfortably as we can keep our feet dry now and sleep, work also, in safety.

Although the German side put over a whole lot of coal boxes to-day and knock some men nearby.

It was a quiet and a dull Xmas all things considered. I got a Dictionary & letter by post from G. Williams. but I eat some goods from the parcels of some days ago. and think very, very kindly of the kindly souls who sent them along.

I sit writing at the moment in my tunnel home reasonable free from shells, with dry feet, ~~xxx~~ eating lollies nuts biscuits drinking cocoa and dreaming of home & parents, and good friends far away.

Christmas Day, 1916
Lieut Richards

460bs HP Sauce 4.00

8 Tins Plum Puddings 16.00

4 Tins Cocoa & Milk 6.00

2 " Golden Syrup 1.60

3 " Peas 4.50

6 " 3 Castles 10.50

4 " Salmon 5.60

2 1/2 lbs Chocolate 10.00

58.20

Units 1.80

Total 60.00

A very Merry Xmas.

I am extremely sorry I cannot supply your order but I made up as best I could.

Yours Truly

Ted Reynolds

A list of good I bought
for my mining platoon as they
were short of ammunition having
just shipped up to Brigade
H.H.P.

James Dorman
1916

Tuesday

Dec. 26th

Another pretty day ending up with a whole lot of rain. All the morning our aeroplanes passed to and from Fritz's territory. I saw one plane brought down, around me it was thought to be one of our own machines, but I've heard since that it was Fritz's. Later I heard that 3 of our planes had been lost this morning. The officers who I am living with now are late arrivals 1st Tunneling Co. and like the old men they can see no peace without severe fighting.

My dugout work is going on slowly in the chalk which I find is splendid standing ground.

I have written to Archie Powell and Pleasant to night. A sentimental story on Xmas Day.

Wednesday

Dec. 27th

The officer I am living with is a jolly good fellow. Very considerate & obliging. But he is a diet crank, as the people who study their eating & regulate their drinking habits are commonly called. He has read all the available works on how to live healthy and continue on to a hundred or more, but as is common with such people he has very weak eyesight and a stomach that needs pampering to. Yet he brags about the food values of certain goods and recommends them to men, like myself who digestive organs can meet the occasion if stones were the ~~fruit~~ eaten.

I am sleeping very well indeed in my little tunnel dug-out with Mr. Ashcroft. He knows Queensland mining well.

Thursday

Dec. 28th

To-day was about the coldest to-date. Even this afternoon the water in the shell holes were frozen over with a film of ice. Early this morning the country was covered thickly with frost. The only time I have seen anything like it was coming down here in the train in late October. There is a great scarcity of materials of all kinds. Jobs are hung up all over, waiting for timber to go on with. Long tunnels are being put in. Reserve machine gun positions are going well into the ground, 20 ft. down and dugout work goes on everywhere but it is impossible to continue the work without timber &c. It seems that the British have just woke up to the immense value of dugouts and are building too many for the timber supply.

Friday

Dec. 29th

There seems to be the greatest possible trouble in obtaining socks, and, more especially, boots for weeks past. Hundreds of men have their feet on the ground and still orders come through regarding the care and attention of the feet. Whale oil must be rubbed in at least twice a day and platoon commanders are held responsible if this is not done while company commanders will be called to account for all cases of trench feet and the men with "trench feet" will be held as having "self-inflicted" wounds and tried by court martial for same. And yet we have no boots to wear."

I have seen no papers for a long time now so know nothing or want to know anything about the war. The 1st Bn. are moving into the line probably I will have to go to. I hope so as I want

to gain trench experience so that when I go back to school I will know nothing of the practical side of the game and therefore grasp things a whole lot quicker.

His Sponza writes 10 pages in interesting style. Dealing mostly with the rows and political troubles in Sydney. It seems that the whole of Australia is seething with discontent and grave disorder.

Her letter was written before polling day so that now the anti conscriptionists have gained the day I hope matters will settle down peacefully. At the same time the red rag element are getting so strong a hold in Australia and are stopping at nothing foul or even murder in the gaining of their ends.

Saturday

Dec. 30th.

The temperature has risen a whole lot to-day the ground is thawing after a whole lot of freezing and consequently leaking through the rotten ground and running into the tunnels and dugouts, making a belly nuisance.

The day was fairly bright and clear aeroplanes and balloons had a day out also the German artillery shells were flying about all day and night; in the mud, however, the shells had purely a local effect and done but little damage. There might have been 60, 50 shells landed within 200 yards of our shallow tunnel they were meant for an artillery position near-by. But, there was no damage done to the guns. A few dugouts were blown in but the men succeeded in getting clear.

New Year Eve.

Sunday

Dec 31st

No doubt if the world was swinging around in a peaceful groove I would be having a little jollification to-night as it is I have only the memories of past celebration and hope for future ones to lighten the load of my dismal surroundings.

Not that I have much to complain about to-night. No. 1st Battalion are in the front line to-night A. & B. Coys. in the position of responsibility. I am an A. Coy man and would have been with my Coy. in the cold & wet to-night but for the formation of a mining platoon; quite a new thing and much opposed by both Brigade and Battalion. But Division created it and so it goes along very much against the wishes of and unaided for by

the discontenting parties. My luck seems to have stuck to me again and I have fallen upon my feet once more. I sit to night in a tunnel and sleep warmly with only a cover of two blankets, and for work, well, there is little to worry about.

The signal office dugout I am constructing is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away over a line of duckboards these duckboards have a cant on in places and being slippery it is quite a feat to walk along them and evade slipping off into the deep mud and water on either side. There is no doubt about the advantage of firming position. He holds a commanding view of our field and the day being fine he pulled hell out of us and seeing that all of our materials have all got to be carried up to

the front there are hundreds,
nay, thousands of troops wading
around carrying planks duckboards
&c. all day long. These men give
a good target for the German
gunners and they just give us
gifs all day long with big shells
and shrapnel. I don't see anything
of the casualties now-a-days
but if we have many days like the
two past days there will be a
whole lot of trouble in store for our
men.

Colonel Stuy complains that I have
allowed too many of my men to go to
Hospital and that before I permit a
Medical officer to see them I must
make sure that they are really ill.

There are few reinforcements coming
so rich or not we have to
keep our men from going
away to Hospital.

Monday

Jan 1st.

I have been caught on the
sentimentality of the season and written
to Comer, Bostock-Smith & Rollston
on the reflections brought so pleasantly
home to me ~~by~~ in the isolated
surrounding by the coming of another
year.

I went down to
Battalion Hdqrs. at midday it was a
long walk over a line of duck boards
to near Bull's Road (where our signal
office off a deep German dugout is
nearly completed.) then Parish (my
batman) and I wandered over the
mud in hip high rubber boots
to Battalion Hdqrs. where I learnt I
had been expected with my party for
days past. I promised to be down
ready to start work at Chalk Cliffs
and daybreak on Wednesday. I then
went across to the Chalk Cliffs and

after wending my way over ground churned up a hundred times over by shells of all sizes and nearing the dugout workings of the small cliff I was somewhat surprised by the machine gun bullets that splattered around. I did not think we were so near to the German trenches.

The dugouts are planned to carry 200 or more men. It would be glorious then for the housing of supports keeping them dry and warm. Two shafts, at one in one grade are down to a vertical depth of 18 feet. They are 10 ft apart so that when driven out and connected there will be room for a tier of 3 bunks. This spot is a splendid one being protected as it is from the shell fire. But why it is not being forced along I don't know, timber is, of course, the main obstruction.

I came away and had to hurry

back to camp before it got too dark to find the duck-boards and then stick to them. It was heavy walking in the mud and when we got onto the duck boards it was quite a task to keep from slipping off them and into the mud and water holes on either side as the rubber soles and the slippy boards offered no grip.

I had a sponge bath when I got back to the tunnel and enjoyed my dinner with Ashcroft & Patterson.

The latter returned from hospital to-day which means I have to get out of his two bunk room and sleep in with the bigant, who however are good chaps.

A memento card from David Morgan was a splendid testimonial to Meggie's popularity. I Gregory's letter was welcome. Both I received at Hqs.

Tuesday

Jan
July 2nd.

I have bothered about nothing at all to-day; just letter writing and chatting. Shell fire from our own batteries has been almost continuous of late, it is the 18 pounders that are going so strong our big guns are not so plentiful now and don't seem to fire as often as when we were here 6 weeks ago. The "push" has undoubtedly stopped for the winter months.

I met my old pal Phil Thomas on the duckboards to-day he is getting on well with the 3rd Battalion for an honest man.

Wednesday

Jan
July 3rd.

All hands were up & breakfasted by 5-30 a.m. ready to move off, but it was so very, very dark we would surely get lost so we waited until 6-15 and then moved on in the gloom. The end of the duckboards were reached in 30 minutes of precarious walking. I then had to lead the way down to the Bluffs over a trackless stretch of country without a star to guide or a direction post. I probably walked further round than if it had been daylight but I hit in not far from the Bluffs alright and the men got going on their bits of shelter places for themselves to sleep in during the day as they go ~~on~~ mining at night. I reported in at Battalion and was

to live in the bottom of a very small German artillery dugout with three other officers and two servants in a few yards of space. The boys try to keep a furnace stove going but succeed in putting up a cloud of frozen smoke only. The smell is bad, and the smoke blackens everybody, and every thing but it's better than living out in the cold."

The shelling that goes on about here is awful. And to walk over the flat from here to the Chalk Cliffs $\frac{3}{4}$ miles is one of the most interesting possible. High craters have to be passed that were made only a few hours before judging by their newness, in working around Gudmوند, and one keeps wondering how it is possible for so many men can

come and go over this area without being blown to blazes. Certainly it makes one a little anxious and sets him ~~in~~ thinking of the rottenness of this war business, right through

It is strange where one's mind does get to in such exposed surroundings, more particularly around the mysterious village of Gudmوند. Mysteries because the Germans won't allow troops to go near it by keeping an almost continual fire onto it. Day and night high explosive and shrapnel are thrown into it. For what reason nobody seems to know, but there undoubtedly is a reason for the Germans paying it so much attention. I will take the first opportunity of going into it and have a peep around.

Thursday

July 4th.

I was up at 6 a.m. and over to the Cliffs to have a look at the works. I found all men lying down and a complaint that there was no timber about.

A fatigue party left some timber there last night but as there are 40 support men waiting there without any shelter they got away with it and it was too dark to find them.

It is raining heavily in this very light rain, not drops of rain hardly but a sheet of vapour that get down your neck and into your clothes without you noticing it.

There is nothing but artillery fire and sniping going on from the German. As many of our posts are now connected by trenches it is necessary for the fellows to go

along over the top in full view while Fritz keeps potting away.

The men say that he can't shoot for nuts, owing the practice he gets.

I came back from the Cliffs at 9-30 a.m., the dugout was still asleep. I climbed into my 6 ft. long and 3 ft. square hole in the wall had breakfast there and remained until 9-30 p.m. when I pushed out again for the Chalks Cliffs amidst a heavy artillery and indirect machine gun strapping.

It makes a fellow think to be walking in mud between old & new shell craters going in the direction from which Fritz's shells are travelling in great numbers some breaking in front but most of them going over head and breaking at all ranges behind. Then our own gun fire coming

from the opposite direction and passing also over-head makes it decidedly unpleasant. To-night the shells seemed to make more sizzling noises and could be heard and followed coming towards me a hundred times I was tempted to "go down" as the shell slowly drew nearer, but in tightening my jaws I moved quickly along with my head down watching the shell holes and picking my way.

The moon shone splendidly. Jupiter and Icar were strikingly prominent. It was a long & exciting walk, with the reports of our guns and the sizzling of the shells travelling so plainly and slowly each way.

Friday

Jan 5th

There is trouble about rations this morning the Q.M. evidently forgot to put to include my 20 men on his ration strength and our men took the 2nd Battalion Mining Platoon tucker. This is a terrible mess. The Battalion had 48 hours notice to obtain rations and I ~~do~~ suppose they forgot.

But the rotten part is that 42 men have to live on half ration when full rations will only just keep a man alive. Why a reserve ration can't be obtained and stored for such occasions as this beats me.

2 o'clock I have just seen out of the dugout and right in front of me was numbers of balloons. German aeroplanes have been hovering about so you can guess the day is clear.

bright but instead of going
aboard we had to lay low to
avoid the whereabouts of our
residence becoming known to the
German.

11-30 p.m. I have returned after
a horrid trip over to the Shell
Cliffs & find about 20 letters
all addressed to "P.C. Richards"
one of them "Ellie's" is contrary to
my desire but she is censored
and I like her better than ever
John Howard sends his greetings and
a good cotton handkerchief. Sir Spenza
comes to light with a long letter and
a handfull of cuttings all full of
political struggle and strife.

I also received some papers Bulletins
from Abercrombie & Africa.

Saturday Jan. 6th.

I was up at daylight this
morning feeling careless and contented
It had rained a little over night
but that was not so very
noticeable. I took a cape ^{the rubber tubing waders} with me
as it looked like raining at any
moment. There was very
little gun fire going on so I thought
it a splendid opportunity to go into
Gudacourt village and have a
look around. I strolled up and
walked precariously about amongst
huge shell holes. The place is so
absolutely shelled about that nothing
~~could~~ be recognised
could be recognised. This is the
mysterious village which the German
is always shelling day and night
Some tell stories of deep dugouts
full of ammunition and valuable

stones, also that there are several batteries of heavy guns there.

Anyhow, I saw very little indeed the place is churned up to a depth of 8 ft. it is impossible to imagine such a place, so often has the ground been uprooted that I was afraid that it would let me through and up to my waste in the loose wet earth.

There may have been dugouts about I may have walked over a dozen, but if so they are so closed together by shell fire as to be completely off the map.

As for guns I saw none either if they are there they are not noticeable although they would be buried in the dirt that has been torn and heaped up. The noticeable heap or mound in the centre

seems to me to be made by a chimney stack falling.

I passed on down through the village noticing an Australian big hat a Jimmy cap and some coils of wire shovels picks &c. There were no dead. Probably blown to bits or covered over by the earth.

I stayed at the Chalk Cliffs a while and then went up to the front line of 1st Battalion trenches.

The communication trench was shallow in places and deep in mud and water when it offered protection.

Ever ally it was called, and I found it necessary to get over the top, taking a chance with the snipers, the shush seemed so deep.

In the front line I was disappointed as there was no firing stands sandbags or

loopholes I could see before coming onto it that the trench was there and well occupied by the number a Tins, run gas or thrown behind. I met W Page at the corner which was very exposed. He showed me a Lewis gun position and a bombing post 150 yards in advance and 80 yards from the German line with the enemy bombing post 20 yards to the left. The German positions had a whole lot of ware outside of them while we hadn't a sign of any. While overlooking "no man's land" with its many dead, German as well as our own, I saw two of our Australians waving a white flag 3 minutes later they hopped over, one man carrying a

stretcher they went 30 yards hurriedly opened the stretcher put a man onto it and stooping low hurried safely back into the trench. It was a brilliant sight and speaks well of the Germans sense of honour after the awful things we've heard about him. In the trenches were duckboards, but there were often breaks at the juncture through which the leg would sink for 24 inches more or less. The whole place was several inches under shuck and water. I did not remain longer coming back to the Chalk Cliffs and to my dugout where I remained until 8 o'clock to night and then done my nightly run over to see what was going on at the works. It is a trying journey at night with shelling going on

Sunday

Jan 7th

We expected to move out last night, and be away from the shell fire, and to some extent the mud, today.

It seems strange the amount of running about that we have lately done on Sundays. We have a weak kind of a Chaplain with the Battalion but I've not heard him "go" as yet.

Orders are through to the effect that we move off at 1700 p.m. for Bendigo Camp.

I took the message down to the Chalk Cliffs and twice I ~~was~~ was hung up by shell fire and compelled to wait until they quieted down or left their fire up past me into Pilgrimage way. Coming back I was not bothered by fire, only water

and shell holes.

At 5 o'clock we moved away with the moon dimly shining in peace and calm. We got onto the duck-board line in 10 minutes and followed the same track right through to Bernafay, a distance of probably 5 miles, without any break in the boards.

When nearly half way along some big shells commenced falling away to the right, gradually working along to our path when the tail end of the party which I was bringing along just missed four bursts.

I was jolly glad to get along behind Brigade Hqs. cliffs.

All 8 o'clock we were in Bendigo Camp and put away into "Bow Huts" which were jolly cold after the warm dugouts and tunnels that I have lived in for quite a time.

Monday Jan. 8th

I managed, after putting all the cloths I possessed over me, in keeping warm last night.

Blanket packed and away by 7 a.m.

At 9 a.m. all hands moved out with the Mining Platoon in the rear of Patterson.

At the Railway Dump we waited 1 hour before getting aboard the train of ordinary timber and lumber waggons.

After waiting again with the men in the cold wind and drizzle we moved off slowly to Mahault where we got out dumped the kits and walked into Fernmont where we are billeted.

It seemed strange that the train we were aboard could not have run into Mernewort and saved 4 miles of marching.

when we were actually aboard the train.

There is a kind of unconscious feeling that the air is a whole lot lighter and easier to breathe out here and away from gun range.

Yet there is no jubilation or laughing that one might expect.

It seems the men are all wooden now and never smile or show emotion although they must surely feel the freedom the feeling of security that must go with being once again clear of the firing line.

Tuesday Jan 9th

I had quite a little trouble in finding my billet last night and when I did so, it was in a big Armstrong Hut with a whole lot of 2nd Battalion Officers, several of whom I knew. Walter Stack Capt. the Hon. cricket. I slept comfortable and rose at 8 o'clock. At 10 o'clock A. Coy to whom my Miners are attached went to Kelly's Baths and had a glorious time in the hot water showers coming home with clean underwear on. Lieut Graham & I had tea in a lovely little nook, (for Officers only) there were two jolly fine French girls there and their stock of small articles very good & pretty. I enjoyed the tea and the surroundings

very much indeed. Lieut Graham has been unlucky. He had charge of a Coy. last time in the line. No 7 Post was badly blown out by shell fire he took the remaining men away and when the ~~Post~~^{Brigadier} Brigadier came around in the morning he noticed the vacant Post and picked up a bill of a row. Graham was taken away from the B Company and put into A Company with his colours very much lowered. Had he placed his men back again before morning nothing would have been seen or known. Although he took a risk leaving the stretch of line undefended. He was a little careless perhaps; but also very unfortunate in being found out. He is a jolly good fellow too.

Wednesday

Jan 10th.

Lieut Moffet of B. Coy is a Queensland shipman, and such a jolly good fellow. I have been having my meals with him and sleeping with the 2nd Battalion Officers. Harry Dingle is there also as well as Sparks and Boardman. Lee is the other officer with all mannerisms and fads, Cumpston & officiousness that are necessary to make a man nasty in the eyes of an honest man. Anyhow, I have been eating with them and getting on very well indeed.

I got the Major's permission to visit the Clothing Department for Officers at Port Moresby, near Amiens, and bustled off at 11 o'clock. Caught a waggon and later an officer's car which dropped

me at the door. I bought some £10.14.0 worth of cloths. Valise Sam Brown, Overcoat, Jacket, Collars &c. The prices paid are remarkable cheap, and although they were out of a lot of goods, and short of sizes, I reckon it was a good days work.

I came back to Hully in an Ambulance Car and walked back to Belmont. ✕

I saw two teams from the 2nd Battalion playing League Rugby and was surprised, as I did not think the men had it in them after the rough times over the past few weeks.

I went over to the 1st Field Ambulance and collected a set of Pyjamas as well as a sweater and other things. The fellows gave Dingle & I a fine reception. Bed at 11 o'clock.

Thursday Jan. 11th

I examined the men and their rifles to-day and gathered in a list of the shortages. It is surprising how careless the men get up in the line and lose their things.

Well I had the men 21 of them lined up on the road for inspection. I wanted to look at their bayonets first. now the order to "fix bayonets" is a peculiar one as far as I can make out you call the party to attention and give the order "fix", the right hand man steps forward two paces and acts as a guide, then comes the order "bayonets" and they put them on. I was not aware of this and gave the order "fix bayonets" the man came forward alight and got the whole party ready for another command which I did not know

of. A ~~the~~ pathetic look on 's faces their faces when in inspection they fixed bayonets and the guide went back into his place and I went on examining the bayonets. Oh, but it was a bad blunder on my part. There was nothing doing in the afternoon.

I tried to write a letter to Mother Ted Reynolds, and Ella Bollsten.

I am in a billet with Fusilier Capt. Walker and attached to A. Coy.

Letters from Mother and Dad were charming to-day.

Friday Jan. 12th.

I was up at 6.40 a.m.,
breakfasted shaved and dressed up
in "Sam Brown" and new (and only)
jacket, by 8.0'clock on parade
and following 4 full platoons of
men down for shooting practice.

Some 40 men had each fired 5
shots each when General Walker,
inspecting troops behind sent along
a messenger to ~~the~~ stop the
shooting ~~at~~ the bullets were
coming his way. At that
moment there were two men
down on the mound who had
fired 5 shots each at their respective
benzene targets and only one bullet
hit the tin at 35 yards distance.
This should be a good record I
think!! The shooting was
poor all around. I was indeed

surprised.

In the afternoon I had to take
A Coy out for two hours play and
running exercises with a view
to making them hard.
Well we got them alright and I
broke them up into "close column
of platoons, alright. Then it rained
heavily. After a spell the fellows
got going playing Sunday school
games like and having dead state
relay races. A football livened
them a little. Then came the fuddle
here were the men lined up in
column of platoons and I did not
know the exact words of command
to put them into column of route and
move off. We ~~it~~ done it yes
but only through the Sergeants
moving off. It is an mean imposition upon
Duggle & myself ~~key~~ without schooling.
Parcs from Walker too. Let's Miller
and Eby.

Saturday Jan 13th.

Packed up by 8 a.m. and moved out at 12 o'clock. I brought up the rear of the Battalion with the Guard & prisoners and some police, with instructions to pick up stragglers, men who fall out on the march. The first I got was a drunk, he would not walk so we, after being abused, left him for the Belmont police to care for. Another chap with a bad heel limped back and had to be assisted. Otherwise my work was very easy. Now we are camped in no less a thing than single thickness tents. The place is laid out well with duckboard walks connecting the Battalion.

But it is going to be miserably cold in this camp. Seems to

me it's a dismal shame to up our men up in tents at this time of the year; but I supposed the "boss" gave it consideration before allotting the inhospitable camp to us. We will be parading from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. I can see a horrible time in store for me with my scant knowledge of drill while here. The marching platoon is broken up, but will probably be formed up again when going back into the line shortly.

Church service

- " -

Sunday Jan. 14th.

On waking up this morning the ground was covered with snow. The forest in front of my tent (Blake & I use together) was beautifully decorated. I thought that our Church Parade would be cancelled, but no fear, at 9.30 a.m. the Battalion was drawn up into square with the snows building up on the heels of our boots making it difficult to walk along. The Parade moved, after I made a blunder in taking up my position, and without any singing went along with his service. Which dealt with the opposites, the coarseness of everything being in the end used in many unexplainable ways. Fire & water for instance are opposites and yet they are blended together by man and

their effects on man are very similar.

It was quite a good service seeing that I never had much faith in him or his ability as I have seen him around the camp and in the mess. It is the first Church service I've been to since leaving Poperinghe. so I enjoyed it in a way; although I would have loved him to have given us a popular song or two.

His ~~prayer~~ prayer for the sick, wounded and dead seemed a foolish point in face of what he said concerning all that happens in this world is thought out before hand and planned by God. If so why then bother about asking his help and assistance. Nonsense.

Monday

Jan 15th

In the mess I heard repeated the story of a spy from Cairo.

B. L. Swannell took a great liking to an Egyptian fellow and he was allowed to wander anywhere at will. He often wandered alone for hours in the officers rooms waiting their return. He was

aboard the ^{troop} ship when the Battalion sailed from Alexandria and was made a big fuss over.

Well! on the day of the armistice at Gallipoli, a Turkish officer came over and spoke to Major Stevens congratulating him upon his promotion and here our enough was the Battalion and Blair Swannell's Cairo friend.

There is thick ice on the ground all day to-day and it is

awfully cold, especially as in tents and no fire in the mess room ever.

Parade at 8 a.m. this morning. A boy had the bath for the morning one of those ~~the~~ miserable baths so common in this country. The most foolish thing in the Army which is saying a whole lot.

Parade again at 2 p.m. this time games to harden the men was the order of the day. I took 30 men and played a soccer match, the ground was ~~the~~ slippery and muddy, and ere long I was the dirtiest man on the ground. I enjoyed it very much though.

Tuesday Jan 16th.

It has been frightfully cold to-day. Yesterday the frost and ice commenced to thaw by afternoon, but to-day it remained firm all day. The result is that we did not get wet but playing soccer, route marching or drilling during the working day from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. less 2 hours for lunch.

To-night we had a lecture from the Major Woodford he dealt interestingly upon the system of offense; the formation to be used in attack. Everything seemed to point to attack so much so that I am beginning to suspect a bit of a stunt on our return to the line in a few days time.

Blake got up late this morning. I was up at 6-35 and he was awake at 6.40. Then at 8 o'clock he went crook on the batman for not calling him and blamed him because he hadn't time to have any breakfast by 8 o'clock parade.

His bad right through is Blake though he knows his military business to perfection. I am orderly officer to night and until 6 p.m. tomorrow.

On Sunday night Capt Edgley & I missed dinner at 6 o'clock so as to see the Picture Show at ^{Baizieux} ~~Rusquin~~.

And we enjoyed it like a pair of school boys. The program was just the ordinary one but it appealed to me immensely. The humorous ones I glowed in. It was a break, a change, and down both of us a whole lot of good.

Wednesday Jan 17th.

Talk about snow; well, we Australians have seen nothing like it at all. It was a full four inches deep covering everything so prettily and cleanly. Snow fighting has been the order of the day, and was carried out with utmost vigour.

I am orderly officer, but with 2 other officers and 4 NCO's I went into Baizieux, met a large car at the Church and after picking up the same number of representatives from the 2nd 3rd & 4th Battalions we bumped along to an aerodrome where we had a lecture from a Scotsman on "Aerial Contact". He said much to say other than when in attack special attention must be paid to

the burning of red flares so that the aeroplane doing contact work will see the whereabouts of the Battalion and report it at once to Army HQs. This aeroplane being the only one in France with mono-planes it will be easy to identify them, and if they are hovering over your lines you will know immediately that they are looking for you. The "Claxton horn" can be heard from the machine and when you can hear it you will know that they are seeking information as to your whereabouts. The signaling sheet, for morse code, is well designed. Our car slipped and skidded on the frozen roads, and often we were pelted by snow-balls. Australians on parade everywhere had their snow fights or built a snow man. It has been a day to remember, but cold. No thawing.

Thursday

Jan. 18th

I has been snowing more or less all day. We went on with the drill as usual. In the afternoon the men came in at 3 p.m. while the Officers played football against the 3rd Battalion Officers.

This game of football is probably one of the most remarkable games ever played by desert-robbers on account, entirely, of the elements. A thickly covered ground of snow being stamped into hard ice by the feet; and Austrians romping around as if it were a mild winter day at home).

The 3rd had jerseys & pants we had anything at all. At full time, 20 min. each way, there was no score; although we had men who's never played rugby before and were tired, we suggested an extra 5 minutes play. During which time they scored through our full back (never played) not knowing the he should have scored by falling

on the ball when over the goal line.

Friday

Jan 19th

A short route march then the squad drill and rifle exercises until 12 o'clock in dismal weather with an awful wind blowing. How the men stick it at all beats me; I wander about with an overcoat on and still cold.

We came in at 11 am. At 12.30 we were out again, making for a ground over which an attack with four Battalions was to take place. At 2.30 the 'Hop over' came and away we went past the yellow flags representing German bombing post, over another line of yellow flags, representing the German first line, onto the objective. Our part failed owing to our left flank advancing too far.

Sat Jan. 20th

Drill as usual in the morning with a repetition of yesterday's attack scheme to go through in the afternoon.

These schemes must do the men a whole lot of good, but the waiting about in the cold is the devil, prior to the attack taking place.

At night, after dinner, Capt Jacobs celebrated his being gazetted a Major. There was a miserable lot of attempts at spirit making all round.

Sunday Jan. 21st

There was a very brief Church parade again this morning. The Padre spoke splendidly for a few moments and with a short prayer sang "God save the King". I wondered why the Chaplain did not sing a hymn or two, but I guessed when the whole Battalion nearly broke down in singing the National Anthem. The fellows seem to have no spirit at all. Yesterday the 3rd Battalion Band was playing "Keep the Homefires Burning" and although it is well known and very popular there was no attempt to sing the words. I really can't understand it all. The men are so dead. Like so many petrified corpses, and won't wake up, although their drilling and marching is quite good. This, however seems to be mechanical.

This afternoon a rugby game was played between the men of the 1st + 3rd Battalions. The latter winning by 3 tries to nil. It was a rotten game as our men could not play together, and what is more 5 or 6 of them actually had a flannel shirt, a cardigan and a sheep skin. With all these clothes it was impossible to run about let alone play decent football.

At 12 o'clock I set out for the 1st Field Ambulance at Buire. I walked it, 6 miles, had a good batch change of underclothes gathered up socks pyjamas towels bed shoes & so on and got back to camp by 9 p.m.

The roads were frozen hard and it was extremely difficult to walk on the road in places it was so slippery it reminded me of skating experiences and troubles. Once I slipped clean off my feet and landed on the

sandbag full of goods I had on my back. It is fine to see the old boys again and have them show their appreciation, by doing any possible thing for me. I had dinner at the Sargeant's Mess, and saw none of the officers at all. I came home with 6 pairs of the best socks made, thick hand made ones.

A parcel from Ruth ^{Sister in Law}. The enclosed card brought tears of joy to my eyes. Poor John & Gilly. The parcel contained all good solid necessities but the 2 lb tin of Golden Syrup was the trump card. Lovely!!

Monday

Jan 22nd

It is after tea-time I am waiting for the dinner bugle. The news is about that we move off for the front line once again tomorrow. and for the first time I can hear the men singing and laughing. The thought of going back would naturally make them dull so I presume it is to hide their feeling and prevent one another from seeing that they desert the line, they sing, or is it that they are thankful to get away from these dismal & monotonous passes. It had to say, the Australian temperament is hard to follow. The officers too were in ^{the} jovial frame all around.

I had a drink with Moffat he a splendid man and carries the impression of Western Queensland when he had been

Tuesday

Jan. 23rd

We have shifted camp again this time into Bow Hut at Pecourt 2 miles on the line side of Albert. I was detailed to remain behind and hand over the camp. This I did and got into the new camp at 7 p.m. in a hugh car with lumber aboard. The 20 men who came with me were light hearted and sang splendidly on the way out. Their songs were mostly home made and very good ones.

To-day there has been a North wind blowing, and although all days have been cold to say is easily the record to date. No the devil. The rocks are as hard as flat. My shaving brush rolled up in a bag with my shaving gear was frozen hard this morning. To-night the wind cuts. The stars are wonderfully bright & clear. Very unusual.

Beiboyt.

Wednesday Jan. 24th.

I have just had dinner there is a lot of mail to be censored but after reading other people's stuff no matter how roughly I can't settle to writing my own letters at all, so to-night I am going to do up my own first. I am smoking a pipe at the moment, although my throat is a bit sore, I seem to be getting to like the pipe perhaps over-much as it is not a cleanly kind of habit in civil circles but over here its kind of cleanly to handly tobacco.

To-night is the third night now, that the stars have been shining glowingly. Orion, Jupiter a young moon, and the two Bears are so plainly visible, and, oh, so lovely. The night is so awfully cold that I cannot stand

stay long to admire the beauties.

To-day is the second day of sunshine, and the second day that German aeroplanes have been wandering about over our lines. To-day they seemed to have very much their own way.

I dread the shelling that this observation will surely bring upon us, as photographs of the area will show up every camp around and there are thousands of men and horses killed about, and the huts and buildings will stand out very strongly against the snow surroundings. The pellets and shell cases kept falling around the camp from anti-aircraft guns.

I don't know how the men in the line can live at all in this cold weather. We can't keep warm now with all manner of clothing on; so how it can be done in the line beats me.

we will soon find out all about it though as we go again at any moment now. The Mining Platoon, however, has been formed up again, and as I have charge of them I can see a chance of getting decent quarters to get down into away from the wind & frost.

Thankful we are that there is no mud now. A cup of water left on the table last night was solid ice this morning. The tinned fruit to night was served with the juice turned into ice. I was going to eat an orange from my haversack before dinner but it was so hard from the cold that I could not have it.

One cannot believe the suffering the cold is causing, and the fellows say but little and are quite cheerful.

Mabel Richards writes a very sweet letter indeed. I enjoyed it very much.

Thursday Jan 25th
Parade at 9 a.m. 1 1/2 hours of route marching. The sun shone brightly but lifelessly as for the past few days, and failed to thaw the ground.

The Battalion mess is still in existence and we live very well but not elaborately. The first 7 days cost me, (the whole mess) 27 1/2 pence for extras.

The behaviour of the officers, sometimes, is rather childish and worries me a whole lot. But then they also are fed up with the war and must act childishly to keep themselves alive. Yes! its hard to live as one should do or like to do. Its just a matter of adopting oneself to the times.

My Mining Party is now complete and I hope that we will be on a sup important job so that I will be able to avoid the cold. A lovely moon to night. A crimson sun set too.

1917

Friday

Jan. 26th.

We move up to the line in the morning; It is so cold that one wonders how the men will live through it. Rumour has it that Australians have already been found frozen on their posts. I don't believe it, yet, I feel sure there is going to be a lot of frozen feet; my experience is that that unless I keep moving both feet and hands become hard & powerless. But then I might be with my Mining Battalion, if so, we will probably have a recently warm support to live in. Yet my heart goes out to those who have to keep watch at their posts throughout the long night, from 5 o'clock until 6 or 6-30 in the morning.

There will be a fairly strong moon ~~with~~ which, with the pure white snow on the ground will make it almost impossible for patrol parties to move about. Let alone an attack or a raid. I doubt if there will be any ^{any} sapling, or wire to be put up. The light will be so good, if the weather breaks and the sky becomes overcast, well anything might happen. I badly want to do a turn in the trenches, but somehow or other I feel reluctant to stay in the rear while the weather is so bad. I doubt if the same time whether or not this frozen weather is not a whole lot better for our men than the rain and continual wet feet and dull clouds with a dark atmosphere and

an environment of depression.

It is about 7 days now since the sky cleared and the ground froze up. It is about 7 days also since I heard our men sing and laugh and they have been bright ever since.

Yes, the sun plays a very important part on the spirit of an Australian. So that, although I believe there is 15 to 20 inches of frost showing, it doesn't so much matter as long as the sun shines.

Sleeping in these Box Sets is very cold even with four blankets and all surplus clothing.

There was four tins of crab for supper to-night but it had to be warmed up before it would come out of the tin. The bread too gets awfully hard and really

Ordered & received 24th 50 ft. of 9x3.

Ordered 26/12/16. 255 ft. 9x3 150 ft 6x1

26th
From Tongueval Depot, OAW, Hammer & picks

has to be heated up. There is a fire burning now in the Hut but it is only a pine fire, where the pine wood comes from is beyond me, but I've got an idea that the batman had to break up some rovers or tear the lining boards ^{out} of a Hut or building of some sort nearby. The waste that goes on in the army is astounding, the fellows neither men or officers seem to have the slightest regard for property of any sort.

December 24th

To Mrs. Alby R.E. Dumph

Please supply 50 feet of
4x3 planking

1st Pugina Hops

Tape measure

2 Tomahawks

1 Clawhammer

2 Saws

6 in Nails

Wood Chest

1st 9 shovels for mining

6 by 1 ft.

For signed Chris King

15 Mar
Working Military Hospital

Aust. Hops
130 Boarding
R.R. Junction S.W.