

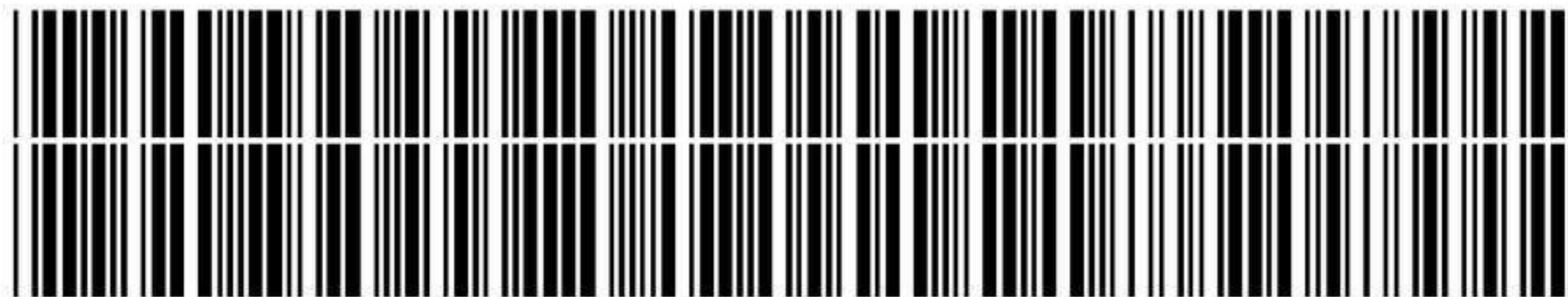
AWM38
Official History,
1914-18 War: Records of C E W Bean,
Official Historian.

Diaries and Notebooks

Item number: 3DRL606/72/1

Title: Diary, February - March 1917

Describes the actions of 24 February and mentions the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions, Gird Support Trench, the Maze and Malt Trench.



AWM38-3DRL606/72/1

Original

DIARY NO. 72

AM 38

392L 606 ITEM 72 [1]

**DIARIES AND NOTES OF C. E. W. BEAN
CONCERNING THE WAR OF 1914 - 1918**

THE use of these diaries and notes is subject to conditions laid down in the terms of gift to the Australian War Memorial. But, apart from those terms, I wish the following circumstances and considerations to be brought to the notice of every reader and writer who may use them.

These writings represent only what at the moment of making them I believed to be true. The diaries were jotted down almost daily with the object of recording what was then in the writer's mind. Often he wrote them when very tired and half asleep; also, not infrequently, what he believed to be true was not so — but it does not follow that he always discovered this, or remembered to correct the mistakes when discovered. Indeed, he could not always remember that he had written them.

These records should, therefore, be used with great caution, as relating only what their author, at the time of writing, believed. Further, he cannot, of course, vouch for the accuracy of statements made to him by others and here recorded. But he did try to ensure such accuracy by consulting, as far as possible, those who had seen or otherwise taken part in the events. The constant falsity of second-hand evidence (on which a large proportion of war stories are founded) was impressed upon him by the second or third day of the Gallipoli campaign, notwithstanding that those who passed on such stories usually themselves believed them to be true. All second-hand evidence herein should be read with this in mind.

16 Sept., 1946.

C. E. W. BEAN.

OPEN

28
Diary
Number
1-2
3

22

17

Feb 28

1
D
2
3

Our people have
been pushing on thro' the
night into Butte,
Wheat & oat 2, Bayonet
the range - on the
right the German is
holding them ^{the} ^{Heavenly} ² ^{the} ^{big}
S-11 Division is holding Melior
2 (?). ~~The other divisions~~
~~have not the Germans~~
~~at~~ . ~~Re~~ ~~divs~~ of Germans
are holding out at
Luisenhof Farm & at M17B
9.5 + one or two other
parts.

It is a very thick

fog, — wonderful
how the weather has
favoured them.

I went up with
Baldwin to St. Dion
taking Kapp to the Corps
Camp as interpreter —
(he insisted on bringing
his gramophone as
well as an enormous
valise — or rather he sd
he'd leave the valise
behind if I insisted
& take the gramophone
— which I wouldn't let him
do)
At about 2 pm Baldwin

& I reached High
 wood & went up by
 the duckboards to
 where we could see
 something. There was
 nothing but empty
 shelled country until
 we came to the right
 of Laucourt S. Abbey
 when we saw the German
 barrage beginning. Baldwin
 got quite a good photo
 of 3 of their shells with
 some observers looking at it, & one
 of our small party going
 towards it on the
 duckboards. By this
 time we reached the

10 Bn Lt. Q. no at
Asxham Rd we were
pretty well in it.

The 10th & 9th had
gone on in the order.

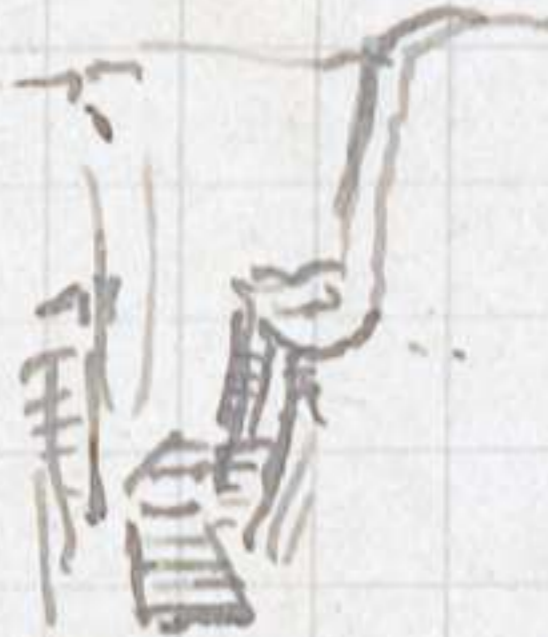
10 Bn on night of 23/24

~~It~~ showed extraordinary
quietness & got a
patrol into the Hook.
& found it empty.

[The 2nd Divn noticed
same - next morning
put up dummies -
Germans didn't shoot, so
men got up & looked
over it they were not
shot at - That evening

they too pushed out
patrols].

On evening of 24th the
10th & 9th went over
- 9th into maze, where
7th were deep & reworked
with brushwood up to
the firestep - the passage
behind the firestep being
4 ft deep &
below the
firestep.



There were fernans - die hard
at Lusinof Farm, 5.
Fernans between 5th & 3rd
Bde.

By the morning our
 people were dug in
 some way in ~~it~~
 - but fog had held them
 up. It was planned to
 go forward under cover of
 fog at 1 pm. but fog
 lifted then began to lift
 just then & the advance
 had to be made in
 daylight. The German
 m.g. killed 2 officers of
 10 Bn & wd. 2 (Collison
 was killed)

They rushed the German
 posts - going forward in

7

x
 It has struck me most
 forcibly that our chance, if
 we do attack, is to
 attack on either flank
 of this wave — at
 Fransloy & Aras; where
 we have guns.
 Blauy when I saw
 him sd exactly the same.

17

two times, riflesmen 8
 1st, bombers next. They
 killed all men in one
 post but took some 2
 prisoners who had
 2 feet.

I believe to say
 that their officers have to
 know they are to go
 back to the Cambrai
 line in 5 stages —
 to be there by March 27. x

The 10th & 9th reached
 Oat & Wheat 2, & some
 of 10th got into Malt by
 mistake & came back
 when they found the
 mistake out — Patrols

I have described the scene in the cable I sent today - it was as crater pitted an area as I ever saw - perhaps the worst.

are in Malt where ¹⁰ aeroplanes ~~they~~ say the enemy are strong near Bapaume Rd; & I believe patrols are in Le Barque & Ligny; & Ind Div not far from the frontiers line - their patrols were moving along Malt & looking for a place to get thro the wire wh they sd (probly crappated) was 20 yds thick.

I went on to 12 Pm H.Q. * The Germans had given a nasty barrage of 4.2 & 5.9 (or 6.9) in extent.

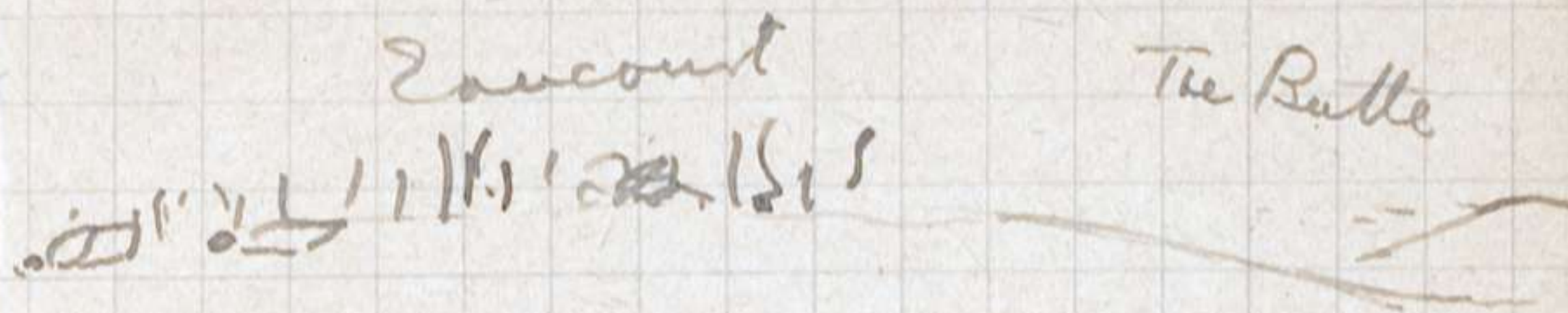
on the space between
Hexham Rd & our old
line (in Support line of
wh, 12 Bn H.Q. was.)

There was a ~~very~~
chattering somewhere out
in front - I suppose it
must have been a good
distance but some of
its bullets weren't!

I found Lt Sam Buller
was up in Support at
1 moment. 12th Bn was
relieving 10th & 11th was to
relieve 9th (we met 21
going up
on our way back)

The Germans were throwing

a good deal of stuff
near Encounter



I asked what happened
to German posts whom
the Boer rushed -
~~and~~ "They were none of them
left," Col. Jacobs said. "They
were shooting our men
up to 1 last - & they
couldn't well expect it."

That is natural. The
2nd Divn hasn't captured
any prisoners at the

Germanus having been
allowed to escape -
Col. Bridges thinks they
it have got some.

Came back at
dark to 1st Div. at
Tricourt Farm - I went
over to 2nd Div. at
Tricourt - where I have
been yarning - on
all topics - to Lloyd,
their gunner, till
after 2 am. I don't
fancy 1st Div. will
have to attack but
2nd may have to

July 29.
O.S. 112

17 take previllers time! ⁺⁵

The worst is that they have
no arty wh can cut
wire except T. Ms. ~~to~~

Lloyd tells me that a
field gun firing shrapnel
cannot cut ferrous wire
unless it fires ^{bursting} low &
exactly onto the wire
& at less than 2500 yds.

In the case of attack
on O.S. 112 on July 29
they tried to cut wire
at 4000 yds or more,
unobserved!

The 2nd Divn Staff

17

seen much better
 pleased to have Smythe
 than Legge as their S.O.C.

I am sleeping in
 Padre Dexter's tent,
 - he is in England. The
 guns are only fairly
 busy - all shells today
 were German as we
 didn't know where our
 patrols were, exactly.
^{By guns}
 We did some C-battery work
 at first - but gave
 it up on finding that
 German ^{big guns} were now
 out of range - could
 only just reach our

16

old front line
apparently "

A little of our
artillery is moving
forward. It is
raining slightly &
very cold.

Feb. 26. Went up today
with Dyson & Baldwin
Took Baldwin to Hlogd to see
if he cd get some
artillery moving forward.
We went up valley
E of Contalmaison villa.
The ~~same~~ ground there was
nothing like so shelled - right
up to Martinpuich - as the
old Pozieres crest - so the
infantry on our right cannot
have had the same time
that the 1st & 2nd Divisions

We went to a battery
 commander ~~was~~ in
 the valley just S.W. of
 Martinpuich & Baldwin
 got a picture of four guns
 there firing from emplacements.
 The movement of guns by
 day had been stopped
 as it was too bright.

But we saw them waiting
 on the road, one battery,
 the guns all covered
 up & the teams some
 distance away.

It was abt 12 so I
 took them off up to a
 knuckle south of
 Martinpuich where
 the ~~the~~ tops of the houses
 of Le Barque could be
 seen - The Infantry
 were to attack it at

17 1.30 — to swing round 19
into LeBarque — & I wanted
to see this. The guns
were fairly busy from
11.30 onwards — but it
was a scattered ineffective
sort of bombt at best.

About 1.30 it became
heavier & then abruptly
ceased. ~~But~~ I never heard a
bombt. cease more completely
Some of the guns afterwards
opened out again on
some other ~~of~~ target
nearby, I believe.

~~But~~ There was no
sign of infantry attack
until about 4 or 5 minutes
later several m. gs. began
to chatter — I should say
there were two ahead &
two on the left of the
attack, which was on
Malt 2, between LeB.
& the Papenne Rd.
Then ~~3~~ three flares went

(i.e. of the 8th who fled in
Sept or Oct 1916 -
the year before
(this was corrected)
(L.B.
22.2.28.)

17

up - so clearly our
infantry had done something.
[We heard afterwards it was
the 18 Bn which had
attacked well 2, but was
unable to get on owing
to m.f. fire].

20
We had a bit of
chocolate & some biscuits
- the country where we
were sitting had been
shelled very little except
by German shrapnel.
The debris of the fleeing
Germans and our following
troops was scattered
across it - amidst a
shot flattened down wheat

stubble.

He went down
past Raucourt L'Abbaye
where our ^{2nd Div} Artillery were
drugging two guns along the
tramway. A young art. off.
was with them - but they
seemed to say & do what
they pleased. One dirt
looking ~~chap~~ talkative
chap was chipping some
ammunition men who
were bringing up ^{ammun}
on a trolley just behind.

"What the hell do you
want to bring that - stuff
along for. Can't you leave
us a day!"

"We've been working for
two days," said one of the
men, [&] (evidently they were
rather proud of themselves

for having the shells so close up. "Anyway it isn't ~~on~~ us that did it - we were told we had to."

"I'm in charge of this party," said the talkative man - who was not working but ^{standing} ~~walking~~ behind the gun at the moment.

If I had been the officer I would have put that chap to the right about in half a second - & squashed him flat; but some of our officers are very weak; that is the weakness of our force, in a pair. I dare say it is of all forces at this stage.

23
 We went on towards
 Hexham road, where
 Baldwin sat down to
 get some photos of
 barrage which Dyson &
 I pushed on. We
~~later~~ went across to
 the 12 Bn H.Q. in our
 old support line; the
 shelling was negligible
 - a few some hundred
 yards away to our
 right, that was all.

They had a message
 there that the 18 Bn were
 to attack again.

17

~~to~~ at 3.30 24
the 12th & 9th were to
push on & put outposts
into Le Barque. 0000

I went on
to find
support
to see

this attack if possible.

The way over was
simply strewn with
dead soldiers - Scotsmen,
Tommys, & I believe
Australians - right
across the wire of
the 9th support. I
never saw the dead

Butte

17

25

lying so thickly anywhere,
even I think at Hells.
A signal wire gave
me the way to follow, &
a half-traddden track
in the mud — it was
of course one great
puddle of shell holes,
men lying on the
ridges between them,
men lying facedownwards
& head down wards
into them, men on
their backs, men on
their sides, men half
buried, ~~some~~ many
quite in the open —

Boat Rd.

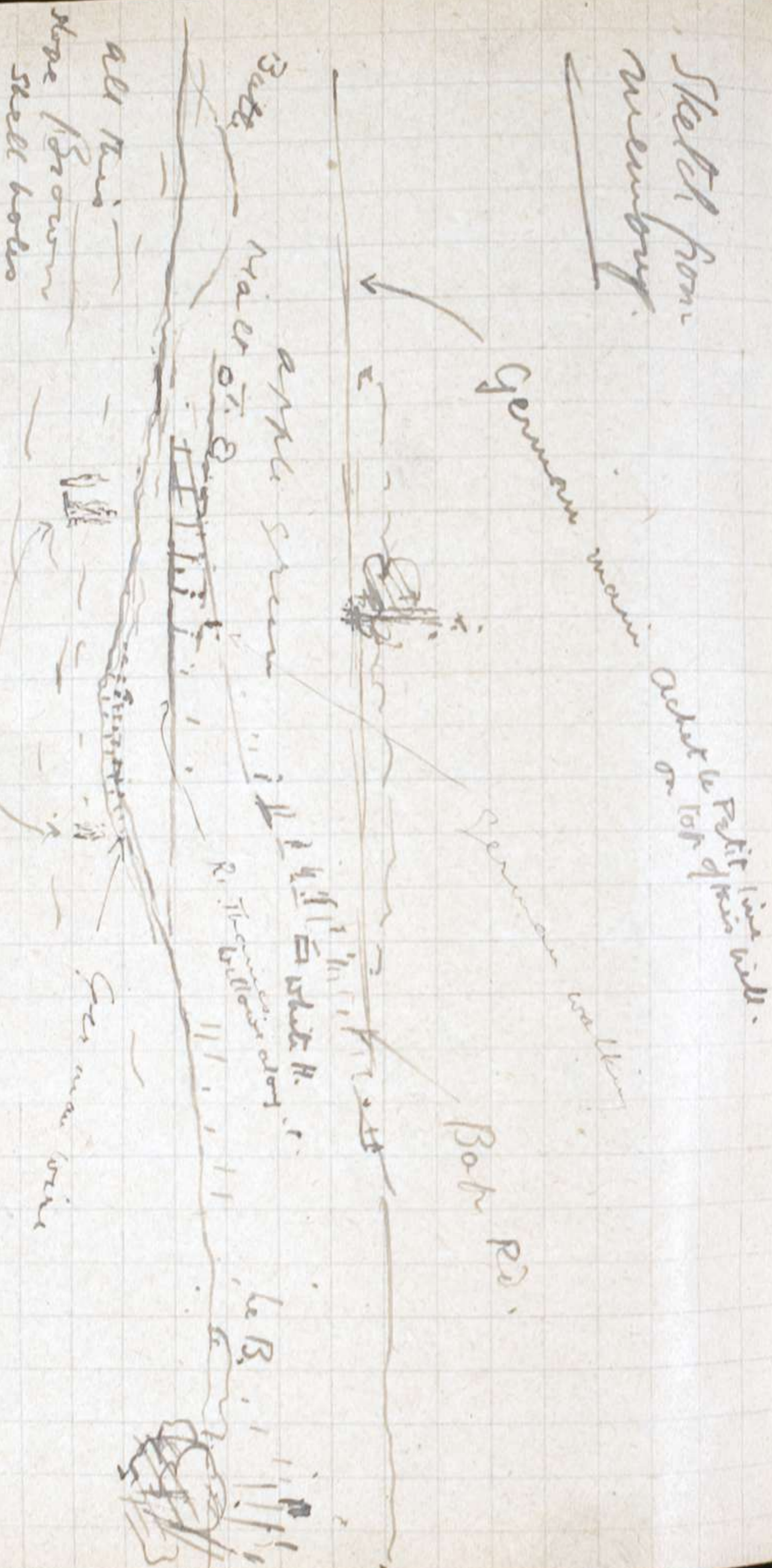
L 13.



Presently I came
to the German wire &
Jird ^{Support} _{Y.}

It was a wide
- Jird support.
Y with duckboards
sunk under the mud
(Jird front trench had been
just a mud ditch)

There were two decent
dugouts in it in one
of which was Johnson
the medical officer of 12 Bn
who got a Military Cross
for coming to ^{my} ^{monument} trench
to attend to LEO. A few
2nd field ambulance S. Co



were sitting in the trench. we got a ~~splendid~~ view of "The River Thames" (a ditch in the valley below) from here - ~~now~~ a depression in the road ran down about 500 yds to a line of German wire firmly fastened on wooden stakes - In it I saw a man running along - it was part of our front trench. ~~see~~ at this moment (Wheat 2₁) - [The scene was as I have tried to draw it on opp. page.]

17

I heard th Col. Elliott of 12 Bn
was over there having a
look at things - Presently
he came back & I told
him of attack & he waited
for it. It clearly did
not come off at 3.30
but at 3.45 our guns
broke out into a barrage
for a few minutes. It
was not a heavy barrage
at all. Some of shells
went into Malt 2, oh
we could see - but
many were high. After
a few mins. it stopped.
There was no rifle or m.g.
fire - no one moved
at all - so we know
th the attack did not have

→ very slowly indeed; on 10th
hand those who saw the 9 Bn
so say they were magnificent
to watch — in perfect line & order.
They have been out for a fortnight
training for the attack on the Mag.
whenever came off.

I took Dyson up to see 1 British
dead in Nonnvaland, & then went
back to 1st Divn. Talked to Jellebrand,
that night I had a talk to Jellebrand,
at present commanding 2nd Divn. He
sd that he found 1 greatest difficulty in
inducing his Brigadiers to report to him
frankly at 1 time when they sd they
wd. He had told Forbes that he must
report today at 5 pm. that Malt 2 had
been occupied at a certain part.
Forbes sd certainly he wd do so. He
did not — had not reported at 7.
The bdes were inclined only to send
patrols — they sd advances apt (were,
Jelly sd, (if in qd had been silenced) &
1 man who found himself opp. 100 yds
in it sd hold up his hands & 1 other
shd file in at that point. Jelly wd do

most wd. — but I don't think most wd.

7
be made. The enemy
~~put in a barrage~~ seemed to
grow for a few minutes — also
an ineffectual one.

We went back
to 12 Bn H. Q. & found
the Germans seemed to be
evacuating the part of Malt 2
N. of Bapaume Road. They
had been seen leaving it. The
18 Bn had been ordered to attack
if it were clear that wires had
been cut. Evidently it was
not clear.

[Col Elliott called my attention
to some Germans coming down
hill near a line of telegraph posts
— I myself saw a German walking
quietly along the railway line,
over the sleepers, beside the Bap. Rd
in 1 valley, with his rifle over his
shoulder.

The 10 Bn has lost 8 officers —
Col. Elliott says that they went over

The 3rd Bde are very
bucked w themselves.

Tonight they are
putting a series of
posts around

Le Barque

on the
rd of the

18th Bn.

They have bombed
up Malt 2 to
Battery topse.

Views from range

27/2/17

17
Sketch from ground

17

Battery

Bap 19

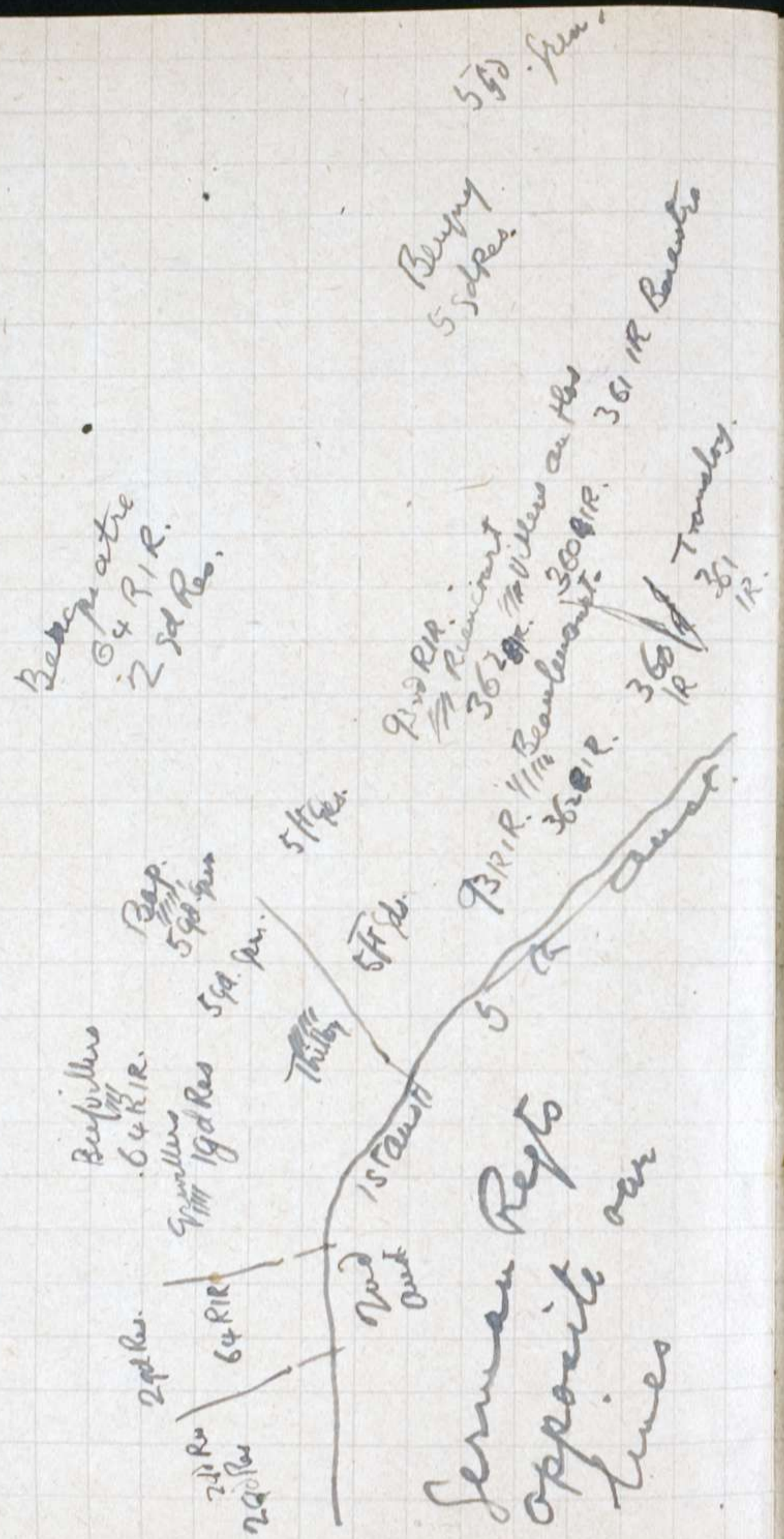
18th Bn

18th Bn

g. shed

Thullong

Barracks



German Regts
Opposite our
lines

The former method of retirement is explained
in my article of March (Butler volume
that long east... Villers au Flos. and the vacant
Till's Transloy line was always held.

5th Foot felt many be taken as an example :-
After the first move.
1st 3 Brn Till's (Hasting's retired Till from 1 or 2 lines)
1 Brn in Regt. Vill Flos. (Having come up from
where it had been resting)
2 Brn in Regt. (From Till where it had been in support.)
Now:
1st Brn now in Till's front Brn as 1st hands. 300
3rd Vill. Flos. 120 men (from front line) - 1st
2nd in Regt. 50

De lands from front line Br
sent to Cambrai for a rest.

Rds blown up by Germans - but sly largely undamaged.
They have been
Cleaning Division at Cambrai under guard.

Compart - Le Transby } are the two main lines
L'ouest - Villers au Hoslin. } by Bapeme.
But they reappear in some divisions
Each Regt. details 10 NCOs. 64 men or 2 mps
& a few telephonists - all positions are being wired as
they go. Men are picked.

It is probable that the Germans are withdrawing

30th Res. Div. & 7th Res. Div. (The Tilt is in bad
condition) & so economising troops in this salient.

27 Feb. Went up
with Baldwin &
Bayley to 3rd Bde

H. Qs in Hexham Rd
(Garré Bend) & on to
the Maze. (Described in
article on "Hills Ploughland".)

This night I came
back with Baldwin
to Anzac H.Q.

White told me that
the 2nd Div. had
got into Galt 2 (they
had had a patrol in
at its junction with
Samp 2, but it had
come out again). They
3rd Bde had also been

38
driven down Maltz by
to Bapaume by
a German C. attack -
but had retaken this
much more. They
were to tackle the bit
of Maltz in front of
Grevillers line tonight.
At about 10 pm news came
in that the 3rd Bde had
taken Ligny Thillois -
the Germans retiring.
The 1st Bde relieve them
today.

17 Feb 28. Spent all day
 in Mouquet Farm
 getting plans & measurements
 of it with Whiteman, one
 of the Intelligence Draughtsmen.
 By 5 pm. we had the
 place mapped in every
 detail. Baldwin
 could only take photos
 of the Cellars, not the
 dugout, but hopes to
 do better later.

Jelly's people sent
 patrols to walk by but
 found wire too land on
 both sides of Sump Y.
 It is to be bombarded so
 the wire is thoroughly cut

17 tonight, & then patrolled ⁴⁰
to see if it is out - &
then

The 5th Div, White
says, have been
most stuck - a
German post in
a trench opposite their
centre. Has not been
cleared. I believe the
Germans have now
retired from it.

I don't believe
they'll ever do a bit
of good with Hobbs.

Souph went up with
White & saw Jelly - &
was quite impressed w/
old man.

17
 March 1. ~~Port~~ ~~Tomb~~ Tomb
 & the American Corps
 came along today & I
 am to take them up to
 the Trazz tomorrow.
 Have been writing
 all day. The old
 29th Div had a go
 for the rest of Saily
 Saisel yesterday
 night & got two trenches
 Potodan & Palz -
 but lost Palz through
 bomb. in afternoon.
 The people on their left
 attacked with a platoon
 & failed. (20th Div I think)

~~Daily Express~~
 NEW BRITISH WEAPON.

Feb 28.

THE ART OF KILLING AT A
 DISTANCE.

PARIS, Tuesday, Feb. 27.

M. André Tudesq, the special correspondent of the "Journal" on the British front, says:—

"These supreme defences of Bapaume have fallen without fighting, but this does not mean without dead. To-morrow or the day after, when the communiqué deigns to be less confidential, people will be surprised at the number of the enemy's losses. The Germans have fallen back in order not to face a sanguinary disaster.

"The Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria wanted to save, if not the ground, at least his men. The mystery is simple. This victory which entails a German retreat is due especially to the terrifying effectiveness of the new gas shells, of which Beaumont Hamel in December and Grandcourt on February 7 provided conclusive evidence.

"The long delays of winter have not been lost. New inventions have been perfected, and in the art of killing at a distance miraculous results have now been attained. At one stroke our patience has been rewarded."

PRISONERS' FOOD

March 2.

I notice this damned lie in the Daily Express today. I wonder why the censor lets it thro! He knows it is not true. The Germans are preparing a Prussic Acid shell - so their

17 prisoners say - & it was
 just this sort of lie about
 Lyddite & its effects in S. Africa
 - a sheer bit of boastful untruth -
 & the newspaper story of Turpinite -
 which gave the Germans their
 excuse in employing gas.
 Turpinite never existed - its
^{existence}
 was a fabrication & so were
 the stories of its success.

The attack on Malt
Trench came off this
 morning. Osborne who
 was out yesterday at the
 Butte tells me that Malt
 is the summit of the
 hill from the point of view
 near the Butte. The main
 Loupart Bapaume till Le Trano.
 - by line runs along the



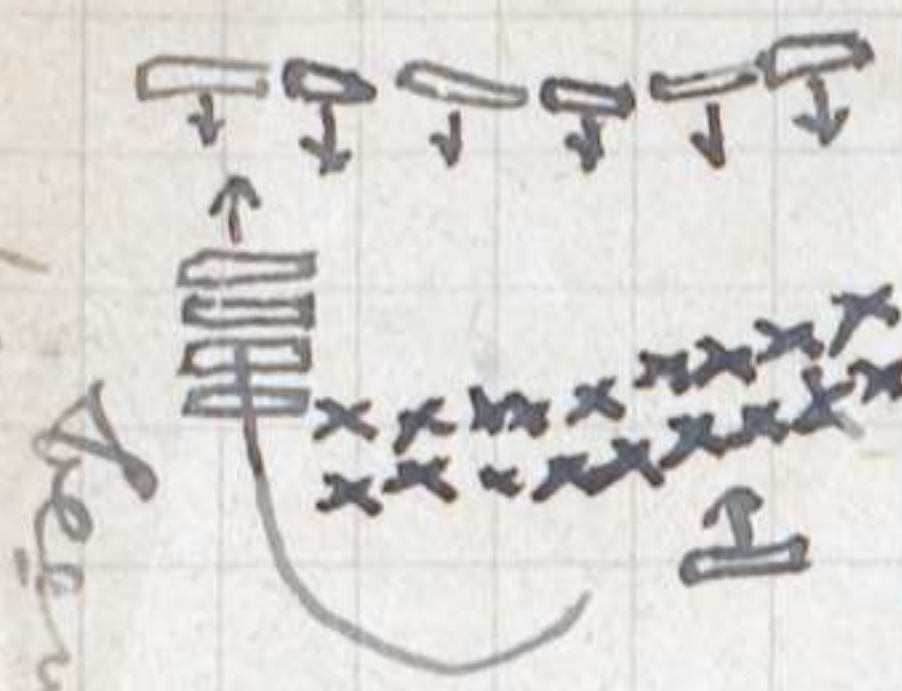
Loopart 2
Erevillers 2

Malt

Loopart 2

17. top but at this point is at some distance in rear of the top. Malt 2 crosses a promontory of hill just here - & has the command down the valley - You cannot see the wire in front of the Main trench ^{in this part} until you reach the summit. That is why the German has been hanging on to it.

On the right rear of our men if ever they attacked the Erevillers line is a very strong promontory; & away near Le Transloy the hills look right down the valley across wh our commands wd have to



There are many signs that Japanese are
 withdrawing beyond Bapaume on Belgium
 Eventually Cambrai; possibly they may
 try to hit back also as we come across
 the open country; economizing their force
 behind one of their strong bits of wire
 on this principle.

There is a statement by a prisoner
 that the Germans have now lost 2000
 men at the St. Quentin line for 14 days.
 all other arrangements for retirement having
 been countermanded. This looks as if they
 have been unable to get away from us.
 They were

17

pass, indeed, now
 do. The dropping rifle fire
 from the first of these
 places we have to be
 reckoned with; the
 only fire from the other.

For details of last
 night's most successful
 attacks I now have the
 file of messages from
 Divisions to be kept for
 me; & the daily situation
 map. The keeping up with
 all these reports, operation
 orders etc is too much
 for me - the record
 scheme is not yet on its
 feet.