

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

Diaries and Notebooks

**Item number:** 3DRL606/73/1

**Title:** Diary, March 1917

Refers to the Dardanelles Commission report, Bapaume, Sir John Gillibrand and the recovery of the buried diary.



AWM38-3DRL606/73/1



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Diary Marsh...

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Original.

DIARY No. 73.

AWM38

3DRL 606 ITEM 73 [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.

ACCESS STATUS

C. E. W. BEAN.

OPEN



Took Col. Wright, <sup>Tomlinson</sup> <sup>Times & D. News</sup> & <sup>Senior</sup> <sup>American</sup> with Cadge (the Press Officer) up to the maze, & to Oat Lane to see the country where the fighting is going on.

The desolation behind the German lines was dreadful - far worse than behind our own. Our heavy shells had crumpled the "yellow cut" - <sup>the shattered</sup> ~~down~~ shell dug ~~out~~ remains of a road, ~~down~~ by the side of which we moved, in a manner that made it a mere chain of pools mud-slime & great deep holes. There were dead Germans every here & there unburied - & clearly our guns had given the Germans an awful time; no wonder their morale suffered. I saw one man lying face downwards in a shell hole <sup>in</sup> his full kit, half covered with mud - evidently hit during a relief & just left there.

We went about 800 yards down to Oat Lane. In a German depot there was Capt Butler of 3rd Bn (who had just



returned to his Bn after being twice wounded. He told us that 500 shells had been pitched ~~at~~ <sup>into</sup> the 2<sup>d</sup> the day before - & he was clearly shaken. The dugout had been broken down by the Germans & only the stairs remained.

In one dugout in Grid 2, <sup>a</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. officer at 1 month of it told us, there was a waterbottle hanging up on the wall - by no apparent peg - just as if stuck there; & also some other object (a bayonet, I think he said). They had been left ~~there~~ untouched by our men - no one dreamed of touching them. They did not even think it wd be necessary to warn the next people who came in - they wd be sure to be wary. In one dug out, two <sup>thick</sup> electric wires were found leading down stairs not explainable as signal wires. They were cut, & two pounds of dynamite found at 1 end of them. The Germans had meant to blow up the dugout but had left it.



The 15th Div reports  
that the Germans made another attack  
apst Sunday 27 <sup>at</sup> 8.15 last  
<sub>Saturday</sub>

night "in one thick wave! They were  
seen massing opposite (I think in N 22)  
& our arty barrage & rifle fire  
beat the attack out.

The attack made apst <sup>the night before last</sup> ~~last night~~ (March 27/28) was  
more important than previously  
thought. The Germans came out from  
M 6 to N 2 in several parties  
(apparently volunteers were called for -  
all exc. the 5th Grenadiers & 8th Foot's  
volunteers - but they knew too much, &  
were detached. They were told  
there were only small posts in  
~~one~~ the villages. One lot was to  
push into Thilloz; one into Ligny;  
& one into Le Barque - the last  
returning up the other side of Bapaume  
road. They moved off across Till  
27 (wh seems to be lightly held, down



1st Bde had taken up an advanced line of posts night before - i.e. they had been told to take up an imaginary line. They dug in as best they cd - but were not connected on the 2nd night - naturally - & are not connected yet.

It is not very safe to go beyond Ligny at present. The barrage on our & wheat of us no doubt to prevent them interfering if it was during this attack if it occurred.

Leslie is very popular w this Bde. Smythe Walker & Jellibrand are all popular officers.

They take it for granted here that the Div is being formed. (I expect tonight may have dropped a hint.) They think Jolly or MacLagan will get it - Jolly I heard as favourite but both good men.

the Tapanne Rd, & then over the open to their objectives. The right hand one was met with a heavy fire, swerved southwards, & seems to have been captured by the 2nd Bde.

The centre one met with heavy fire; it was in 3 waves. A man in the 2nd wave with the 1st wave was wiped completely out, 2nd wave came under heavy fire & broke back, 3rd wave never left.

The Northern or Eastern party got between two of our posts in the fog but under heavy cross fire; it pushed down & came on a 4th Bn Company H-Co near Red Cut, in N1 D q.1. shot the sentry & bombed the officers occupants as they came up the stairs. They captured the occupants but in going off with them seem to have lost their way in the fog, wandered into a post of the 4th Bn (?) & were all captured & the ~~prisoners~~ prisoners released.

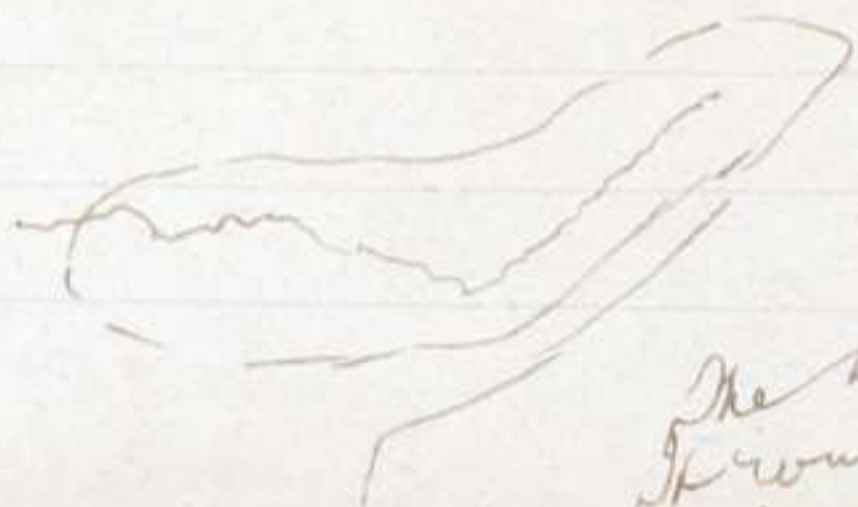
The Germans captured apparently one whole post & L.M.G of abt 29 men last night.



Back at 1st Divn for the night. The Q mess there is very much up against Anzac H.Q. They want to be told what is wanted of them, but not how to do it.

In particular they criticize the Anzac Light Railways. They have not moved 300 yds, they say, since the retirement of the Germans. They wd have had the rails right up if themselves allowed to do the work - but they think Jutrell does not keep his men up to it (or rather their men who are detailed to do it - pioneers & Engineers; ~~and~~ Hancock they say was not considered good end by the 1st Divn for its Engineers. They turned him out - he was at a loose end & Anzac put him in to this railway unit.

I had a look at the Maze today. It is like this.



The maze angle thoroughly follows the top of the hill into this.



It is the highest land therefore stony held.



11.45 pm. Gun fire as if during a raid — or a short barrage.

The 1st Div is being pulled out. 2nd Div & 3rd Div each lengthen their line. Looks as if Jellicoe is ✓.

March 4. Spent day with 9th Bn getting their account of the fighting. There is no doubt they were at the top of their form after a fortnight's rest in Albert. They were to have gone out the night after the evacuation for 4 days rest till Feb 28 or March 1 & then to have come in & taken the maze. Wilder Nelson, their 2nd in Command is a keen chap — & an English gentleman of a sporting type. ~~But~~ Little White is a good confident fighter — an Australian. But Knightley is the man there who is telling me the literal unadorned truth. He talks like an Englishman but with some slight Australian accent — I don't know which he is; but he is game & he tells the ~~truth~~ plain story without decoration.

The night is intensely cold — freezing — it has frozen the last two nights. Nothing doing today.

Leslie has found out that



one of his posts with a Lewis m.g. disappeared on the night of March 1/2. It was just to the north of the Bapaume Road - abt 10 or 12 men of 3rd Bn.

They cd not be got at till night. On night of 2/3 it was found they had disappeared. Evidally some <sup>one</sup> of the German parties rushed them.

The man in the next post or the next but one was to be relieved the night; but it was so foggy that when relief turned up he kept ~~it~~ <sup>on</sup> with it ~~him~~ and had 20 men in 1 post the night - (or he wdnt let the relieved men go back). The Germans ~~from~~ stumbled onto this post & lost heavily the next post but one <sup>to the supposed post - one</sup> on the right of the Bap Rd was suppressed also - they were 5th Bn. So the Germans seem to have got 20 odd prisoners unless any of our men were killed.

Had a letter from Judge Ferguson of Sydney, enclosing a letter to the Times complaining that they had not



I haven't F's letter here, but  
on the whole I think he was probly right.  
I have changed my view since then - we  
should have provided more  
& more continuous news by <sup>Radio</sup>  
providing additional comms. 24.11.28.

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enough news in Australia about the  
doings of Australians - a very exaggerated  
statement. I don't think he means it  
to hit at me, but it does. If any he is  
right in saying that Australian papers  
very often do not print my letters; why  
I don't know, except that they now get them  
for nothing.

Deep Snow all over the ground this morning.  
March 5. Col. Nicholson, C.R.E. 2nd Aust  
Div. asked me yesterday to come up with him  
& see the big stores they have captured  
on the Bapaume Rd past Leslars. He  
says that the Pioneers in digging their  
mile long tunnel <sup>towards</sup> ~~past~~ Jendecourt (meant  
to go to front line but only taken abt  
1000 yds to Bulls Rd) struck the  
old French tunnel from Flers to  
Eaucourt L'Abbaye. Their long tunnel  
was not altogether a success - it  
was suggested by 4th Div who  
finally did not go on with it except so as to  
to put signal wires through it.

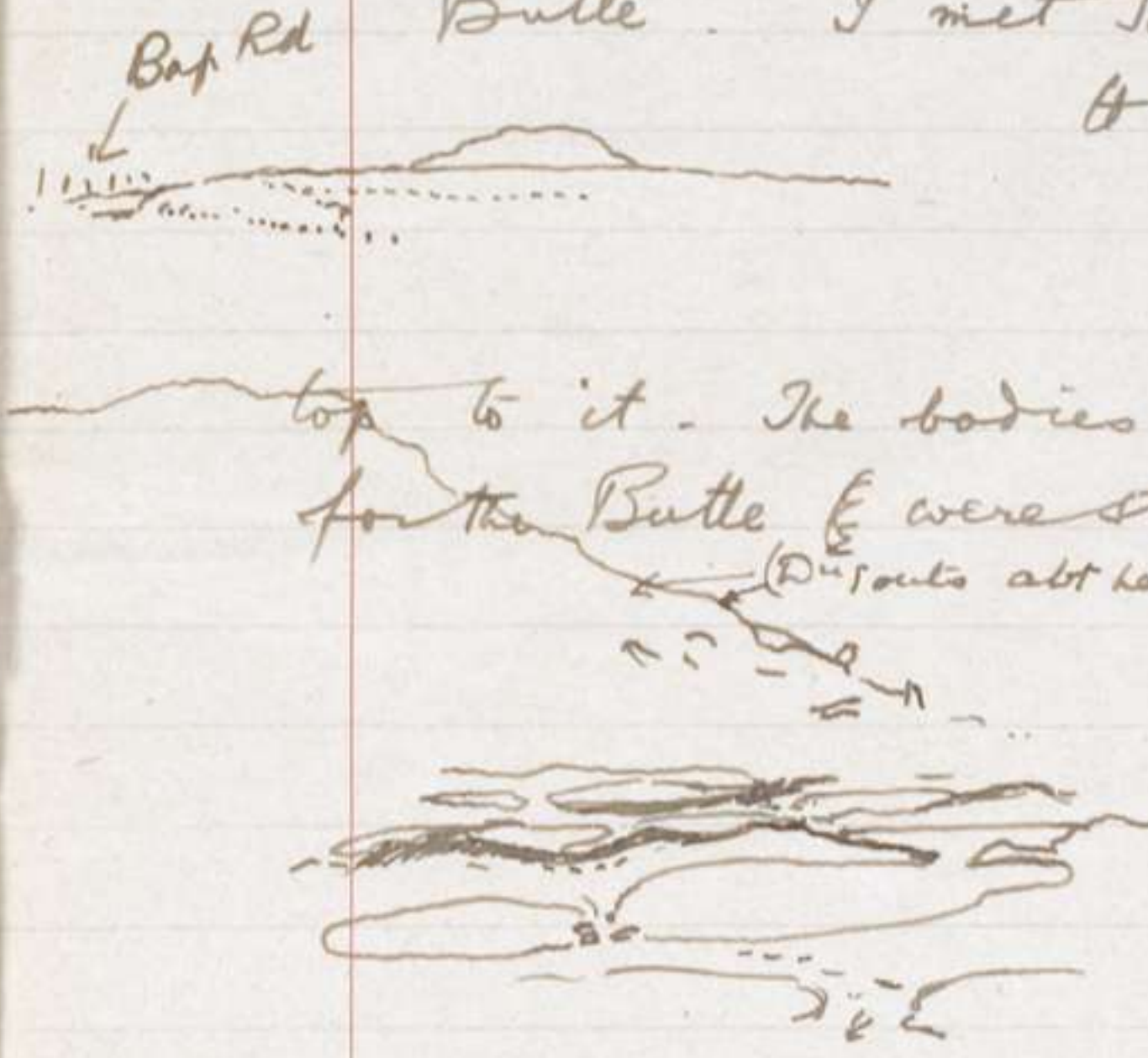
The men in the dugouts at  
Eaucourt L'Abbaye, he says,  
sd that they cd hear <sup>sounds of</sup> ~~the~~ men.



We went on the Decauville  
 (Cor rather light rly (16 lb rails)) to Clarke's  
 Dump. The 1st Divn are getting 60 lb  
 rails on their sector, but it is being  
 laid by Col. Futrell's Corps light Rlys -  
 & all the Divns & Enps are very much  
 up apt Futrell. They don't realize a  
 a big part of his job is to carry ammo to  
 the Heavy Guns.

below them — <sup>possibly</sup> probably an echo  
 of their own footsteps in 1 tunnels  
 of the old monks wh are sd to be  
 there. There was a tunnel from  
 Bapaume towards Le Barque, used by  
 1 German, not far from 1 Bap. Rd.

I went on past our arty  
 wh was above our old dugouts in  
 the bottom of valley below the  
 Butte. I met Sale there who told me



that 1 Butte was just over  
 the top — so I  
 went over the shellholes

top to it. The bodies of 1 man who fought  
 for the Butte (were still there. I went across  
 between the shellholes  
 wh were like a  
 chain of lakes -  
 you had to  
 walk on the isthmus  
 between <sup>the crust</sup> ~~it was~~

of frozen earth was often soft thin & you  
 had to so carefully not to be bogged.  
 The mist was thick at half a mile  
 & one solitary German gun was  
 shelling towards the Bap Rd. The



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Butte was a big mound, probly an old burial place

(This day written up in Evening Paper letter no 26.)

5-6 2 1/2  
Lesara st  
57  
Snow

(Contd 3 pages ahead)



March 6<sup>th</sup>: Went to 5<sup>th</sup> Bde, 5<sup>th</sup> Div, & 29<sup>th</sup> Bn today. ~~He~~ Came for night to Corps to get a couple of articles written.

Butler tells me that there has been a heavy explosion in Irel - 3 or 4 houses going up; also that ~~the~~ the air people report that ~~the~~ 14 trains have been seen going Eastward today, from behind Bapaume; & that there are fires in all villages behind Cambrai. G.H.Q. at last believes that they are really going back.

<sup>More open warfare - our men</sup> ~~spot at present.~~ <sup>rejoice</sup> ~~rejoice~~ it as almost a spot at present. Also, up north in front of 3rd Army, they have ~~noticed~~ noticed that 1 German wireless has closed down (as it did here before 1 evacuation). The news of the wireless closing down, tho' it reached Corps H.Q. before the evacuation was noticed was not sent out till afterwards, Herbertson tells me. Surely that is a bad bit of work.

While tells me that he had a note from Hutton Wilson saying that Baldwin had told him that he was under my orders <sup>- that I told him where to go & what to photograph;</sup> & saying that he trusted this was not 1 case - and that Baldwin was directly under Intelligence / D. G.H.Q.



As a matter of fact, through my reports to Hitchen & Smart, the whole photographic paraphernalia at S.H.Q. is being overhauled - they have evidently received short sharp instructions - Baldwin is to have his own developer, his own car, & his own developing ~~colored~~ room here; he has obtained the help of an Australian to develop for him, & is at once to be allowed the use of his cinema. I suppose H. Wilson realizes that this was my interference - or he may resent my having written to remind Gen. Charteris of Sir Douglas Haig's promise to me that we shd be treated exactly as 1 British & 1 Canadian.

While <sup>had</sup> written him back - ~~for~~ once - just exactly what he thought, without stopping to be discreet.

While saying to be suggested to Jelly that the 6<sup>th</sup> & 2nd Divs were kept much longer in front of Grenvillers the 4<sup>th</sup> Div <sup>had</sup> be called in to do the job and give 2nd Div a rest. Jelly sd "Oh but we don't want anybody else to do our job for us" Bridges not quite "stuffy"; & Barnard says



It he doesn't like to go up to reconnoitre they don't look at all pleased to see him up there at present.

Little MacCallum made a very good reconnaissance of their whole front yesterday - including the new front which they began to take over from 1st Bde yesterday; the ~~5th~~ 5th Bde moves up tonight - to have a 1 bn front. The 5th Divn has a 2 Bde front with 2 Bns in each sector - whole of each bn practically in 1 front line.

March 7th. Wrote up the first part of the Evacuation.

March 8th. Snowing. Wrote part of the Evening part of the Evacuation & an Evening paper letter.

March 9th. Finished Evacuation letter.

Baldwin returned from England with his material for his dark room. Some of his shell photos taken on Feb. 26 were excellent. 48th Bn passed looking wonderfully well.

The Dardanelles report is out.

March 10. Stayed at Anzac to finish up "Rising Sun" a last issue; & get correspondence clear. The Dardanelles report is out.



occupies more than 5 columns of the "mail" — 5 columns of back-lash — acrimony — I told you so: anything but the one big task ahead of us; & all this because a few excited conservatives one night in the House of Commons thought they had ~~found~~ an opportunity of beating the Government still lower, & forced Asquith either to include the Dardanelles in his Mesopotamia inquiry or resign. Of course — being Asquith — he gave way to them. It is a big extraneous hampering interest & excitement at a time when only one thing matters.

Well — politicians are the same mean crowd all the world over. In Australia ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> Senate has forced a general election; it cannot take place till May 5; & Hughes cannot come to the Empire War Conference — until then, at any rate. England is just beginning really to feel the pinch of war now — just beginning really to know potato hunger; Australia still goes on with her belly full — as if no war were on. It is like a parting of the ways, the one



country now making a real sacrifice, going into it, now, for the first time, like a machine; Australia is letting those sacrifice themselves who want to sacrifice themselves - The rest hardly know there's a war on.

It is the Scottish Farmer, in Britain, who seems to be rising to the situation best; and facing it as one might have predicted. The British potato merchants etc. seem to be looking out for themselves almost entirely.

The 2nd Corps attacked to night on a front of 2 Divs (2nd & 18th) at Iles - & got to German 2, to find 1 German just packing up to go; & took 200 prisoners.

Two nights ago, it being a beautiful moon, Kapp, the intelligence officer at the prisoners camp - a small Jew, of great assurance but plenty of pluck, - went up to see what it was like with the other officer there, Scott. They walked up the Bapaume Rd, right over Malt 2, seeing no one; past the second hole in the road - tank trap blown by 1 German just before leaving, -



— 9 if they had gone another 300 or 400  
 yds we have certainly been shot or  
 been taken prisoner. They thought at  
 this moment of getting back into  
 the trench they had passed — & were  
 no sooner in it than crash began  
 to come German shells on to the road  
 — & machine guns & all sorts of things.  
 They say it was an attempt to smash  
 our m.g. near the road — but I dare  
 say it was really a touchy sentry who  
 saw Kapp, Scott, & Kapp's batman &  
 thought they were an attack coming  
 up the road. They put the shells  
 all round — Kapp & the others lay  
 down in Malt 2, 3 then a German  
 shell came right into 1 2 & they  
 were covered w/ bits, & 1 2 revelling  
 began to burn — so they jumped  
 out & ran along S. of the Road toward  
 Le Barque. Then 1 batman shouted that  
 he was wounded — & indeed he  
 had two pieces of shell in his arm  
 (or the holes of them) & one in his  
 leg. They put him on a trolley as  
 soon as it was safe — & the procession

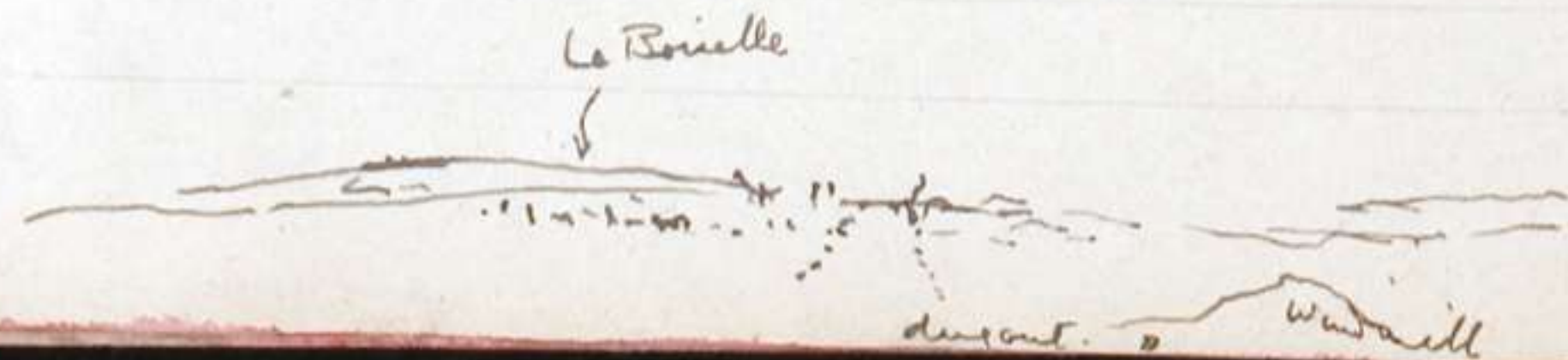


came home.

March 11<sup>th</sup>. First real warm sunny day of spring. Went up with Baldwin to get photos of Le Sans, the Butte, Bapaume Road, Warlencourt, & the old farm Le Sans Rhy Stm. After that to Mouquet Farm which we finished measuring (with Whiteman).

The artillery were staffing the wire in front of Loupart Wood; & the Germans were replying pretty fiercely on 2nd Corps area. I took a sketch of the position in a pocket book - It sounded to me as though the ~~German~~ British were attacking, but it was really only the ~~British~~ were in front of Loupart Wood who are being cut. Bidwood tells me that the ~~British~~ patrols report the wire as not cut still - the business is a very slow one. He says - "I am getting white to make them send in a definite report about it. If the patrols can go up there & examine it, they ought to send up 50 men with wire cutters & simply cut the wire quietly - leave it there still, if they like, but still cut it." I believe






our attack wd have been made <sup>22</sup>  
at the same time as the 1<sup>st</sup> 2nd Corps  
if wire had been cut.

A soldier of the Norfolks at  
Mouquet Farm told me that there was  
very little wire in front of them yesterday -  
"There isn't any wire to speak of now,"  
he said. Of course this is what a fight  
around an open village. They will  
find wire enough when they come  
to Frevillers trench. This man of the  
Norfolks had been "over the top" six  
times, all on the Somme - & wounded  
3 times; & he was very proud of it. He  
said his Coy only had one killed yesterday.

Coming back up / Bapaume  
Rd - ~~we~~ I noticed how 1 German coming  
up to Pozieres were under cover until they practically  
reached the top which is exactly at the  
windmill



From the windmill they could see down the village,  
the top of La Boisselle - saw a fully open  
& a splendid look down out north



The photos show Le Sars after 5 months shrapneling; or more. They will be there to compare with Toziers after ~~two~~ months. I am more than ever convinced that never on the Somme have I seen a hilltop battered like that one.

But the ground about the Butte has been equally shattered for a short distance. Courcellette & Martinpuich are nothing to it either of them. Both have quite a fair amount of building visible - the Butte country, like Toziers, is powdered.

Our planes had a bad time today. We are using our slow planes; until the pilots have had practice with the little new fast ones. They are not allowed to cross the lines - as yet they do not go over. Consequently the Germans "sit on the tail of our big two seater planes." Of 10 planes which left Lavioville this morning 5 have not returned. One of the 18th Sqn. was on the roadside below Le Sars. Three of ours landed all right & they say the pilot of another which descended at Loupart, came back to our lines without seeing a German.



Birdwood told me the report as a "rumour" — but I don't believe it is true. As we ~~the German~~ watched some of our planes — one, I am told a German, — came down nose downwards to earth like a leaf from some tree — curling round & round with one wing off.

You could hear a sort of cheer from our men in ~~the~~ various parts of the Sars.

March 12 Round to  
6th Bn. Newstrat  
Bagdad has  
fallen. Everyone

very much cheered. Our patrols have still found wire in front of Doupart wood only partly cut.

Read the Dardanelles Report. I cannot understand how they let Churchill down so lightly. He was clearly the clever active man between two rather slow & solid ones — Asquith & Kitchener — & the way he pulled the strings & got his plays through by hook or crook (generally crook) is shown in his tricky telegram to Carden on Jan 5 — a piece of sheer diplomacy — another word for roguery.

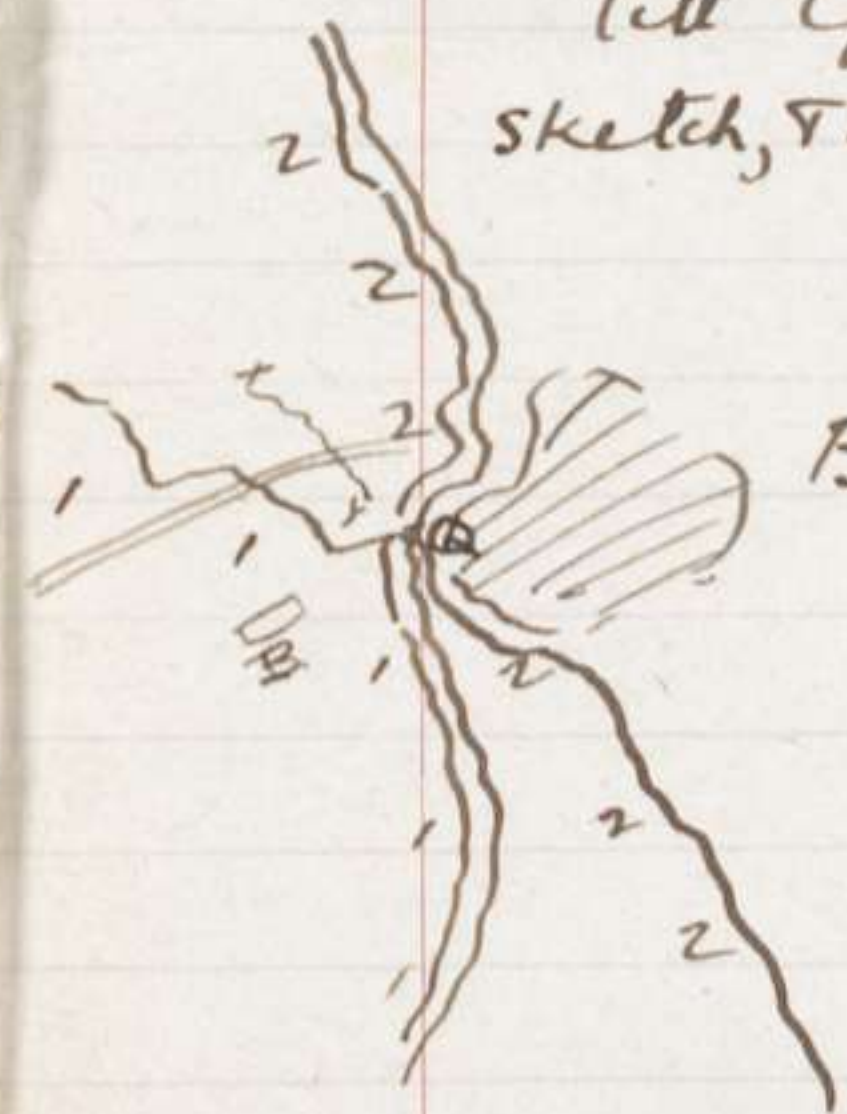


March 13. I arranged to go ~~to~~ to the 6, 12 & 5 Bns today to get their stories of recent (7 Pozieres in case of 12 & 5) fighting.

As we left Amzac Baddy, my driver, told me that a rumour had arrived that the Germans had left some more of their Z.

I heard fragments of rumours all day, & on returning to night, I found that the 7th & 6th Bdes last night had found 1 German Z empty 3 hrs after 1 German had left them. They had pushed on thro' Grevillers & now had posts in Grevillers on the far side of the village.

The Germans seem still to hold Till Z. Calling Loapart-Till trench "1" on this sketch, & Loapart-Transloy "2", they seem to



hold a line which is a combination of two - the double line <sup>shown</sup> opposite.

The 5th Divn has been ordered to push against the double line "1" tonight (i.e. Till Z)

- I suppose this means to make a reconnaissance or raid strong enough to show if it is held.



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March 14. Went up with Smith to see Gellibrand & saw Smith (S Bde) & Tivey & Lloyd also.

Traffic - we going down thro' Lesars & there has been a corduroy road made round the big crabs. <sup>Lloyd's</sup> Arty we going up.

Found Jelly in same <sup>series of</sup> depots as Smith in the ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ Lesars cutting & they Jelly

~~LESARS~~

told us it from 9 to 12 on morning of 12th the Germans were putting 5.9. at rate of 2 a minute round about their H.Q.s. This gave him his first idea that they must be going back - the batteries were firing off their ammo. It was very unpleasant at lunch (wh he always has upstairs in a room at the top of depot).

He went across to Smith in the gully near Factory Corner, & found that the enemy had put 250 periscope bombs into Smith's front line - evidently using up all his old stuff.

This evening Jelly sent out a party wh reconnoitred the wire in front of Loupart & we fired on & had casualties. But the enemy was seen firing on his own front line or near it - & Jelly



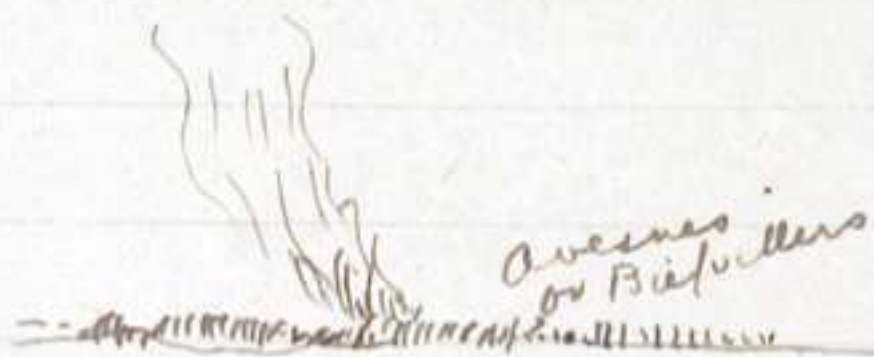
sent 1 order that the trench must be entered. He rang up division but division wd take no responsibility beyond telling him to go on patrolling. He sent across his men in extended order & they found gaps & got into Frevillers 2, - the German having just left it.

(Or possibly I think this was when he rang up Divn - but they wd not initiate any scheme, anyway).

7th Bde was being relieved by 5th Bde - 17 Bn marching in - & they pushed on ~~at~~ somewhat later through Loupart wood & put posts N. of Frevillers; the 6th Bde put its posts E. of Frevillers.

Last night they went on again. The 6th Bde got into the trench marked X-Y on the plan two pages back, & when there, got the 8th Bde to come up through their trench on the Bapaume Rd & go down it towards Till 2, - The 8th Bde got into the Brickfield<sup>(B)</sup> (from wh the Pineapples (or pigeons) used to come) &



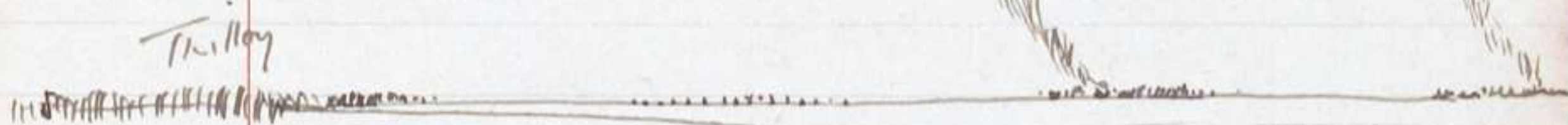


also into the X-Y 2y s. of Bap. Rd. They are sending strong patrols tonight apt the factory in N end of Till, & apt a more southerly portion of Till, & are also going to try & bomb down the X-Y trench into Till.

At present they get very fine from near Bapaume behind Till 2y abt Q on sketch plan. 14<sup>th</sup> Bde is also going to test Till 2y further S.

This afternoon the Germans started firing shells by the salvo into Le Sars, & one cd see fires in a number of the tree clusters (wh mean villages) on 1 skyline.

The Germans are at last retiring opposite the XIV Corps. It seems to we are ~~to~~ recognised to be following 1 German closer than any Corps at here.



It is clear to when Jellebrand as divisional command & he twisted Forbes' tail, & Forbes went off in a little bit of a huff to see why his patrols were not sending in reports. This has resulted in the 6<sup>th</sup> Bde going more energetically into



This interesting walk is described in my article of Mar. 16.

As we went thro Jevillers we reached a cross road - one rd running E & another branching S. We were undecided which to take (the ground - white mud

on the roadway - showed practically no tracks) but eventually took the road to the S. It was as well we did, for it led to the front line post of the 21st Bn. Up the other road ahead of us 500 yds away we should have found the German post. The corner was being shelled with pineapple bombs from a small trench mortar; none fell when we were there, but we heard them from the post to which we went.

(C.W.P. Nov 25. 1928.)

Wire nothing at Hauptst. Inf. report is absolutely correct

this fight than ever.

March 15. Took Maj. Evans & Capt McCall on the most interesting walk, I think that I ever made - Factory Corner, Hens, Gendecourt, <sup>Fitzfield</sup> Bayonet Z, Rye Z, Luisenhof Farm & Trator, Ligny (where we were shelled back to the valley) then Ligny, Ligny Trolley, Le Barque, Misty Way, up Bapaume Rd to near first hill top, across to Wend of Jevillers, (over ~~the~~ our Z & Warlencourt Z) Quarry (over Jonds Bertini) Church, Coy H.P. through Jevillers, back to a Quarry depot, Warlencourt Z, along wire to Fort Stein, where Loupart wood crosses it then down to junction of Malt Z, Emma alley & Gamp Z, down Emma alley, past Warlencourt, ~~to~~ Galwitz support & Salwitz - to Le Sars - & so to duckboards to Wella Camp.

Big fire in Bapaume.

March 16. To Amiens.

We hear from the air that Till Z is absolutely empty. But our p Every.



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our expectin ~~to~~ at dinner tonight th it  
 wd be desertid & we shd be in  
 Bapaume by tomorrow. But after  
 dinner came news th the 5th Divn  
 had tried it all along & found it well held  
 10 m. or so. Looks as if 1 Boche had  
 bn lying low on purpose.

March 17 Herbertton looked in this morning  
 as I was dressing, w/ news th  
 Bapaume had fallen to us.

Smith & Jellibrand - leaders of 5 & 6 Bdes -  
 put their heads together & wanted to  
 attack last night at 3 am. as they  
 believed 1 German was going. He threw  
 145 flares in 105 minutes - when  
 our patrols were heard by him he  
 blew 4 whistles & then one or two  
 snipers & a few m. or so opened fire -  
 our people had located just where these  
 men were. Jellie & Smith wanted  
 to rest - 1 German w/ with a small  
 party w/ flares etc in front of each of these  
 German snipers or m. or so, & small  
 columns to cut wire & get in between



Each party of flare throwers + 1 next. 33  
~~the two~~ The 18 Bn was ordered to  
 send up 200 men for 1 job, but  
 division, when the operation order was  
 sort of confided to it, would  
 not permit it. At 9 o'clock they  
 ordered patrols to be sent out (with  
 reported situation normal as they  
 always would when fired on  
 as m. g. - so it is normal as far  
 as they can see; + at 11 P.M.

Divn Commander ordered 1 order to  
 advised patrolling. ~~At 4 P.M.~~ 18 Bn  
 had to be withdrawn (to delight of  
 19 Bn - Scott) + <sup>19 Bn</sup> was to patrol.

At 4 P.M. they excitedly reported to 1  
 Germans had left; by 6.30 they were  
 well out beyond Dieffellers;

The 5 Bde got a move on at 8 am. -  
 30 Bn getting into Rapenne + lining  
 up on main street after some 2  
 men were hit by snipers. At 10.30  
 they got orders to go ~~down~~ <sup>further</sup> right,



On reaching Bapaume, after exploring the old  
~~market~~ gardens & moat, & passing some of 8<sup>th</sup> Bde  
 on the roadside (photographed by Baldwin) &  
 in the crater at a road intersection East  
 of the gardens, I met P. Kennedy (a young  
 Staff officer of the Corps) & together we  
 walked through the S. part of the town  
 by the Cambrai road. The Germans  
 were shelling some big school or bldg on  
 the left (which it had an open rail yard)  
 with 5.9, & some of it exploded pretty  
 close on our left. ~~After~~ After a short while we  
 walked out of the town into open fields and  
 found a company of the 30<sup>th</sup> under Capt Barbour lying  
 down there ~~in~~ in the grass north of the road.  
 Far away on the right was German transport - 2 or  
 3 waggon - retreating towards Cambrai. Across  
 the open in front of us, Barbour said, was a German  
 machine gun in some rear guard post. The Germans  
 had been sniping men who went across to some huts - a  
 German beer garden - S. of the road. The story of this walk is in an article  
 I wrote on Mar 18<sup>th</sup>.

German beer garden - S. of the road -  
 for the refreshment  
 of the troops - little  
 latticed cubby  
 houses with seats  
 & tables, & German  
 noticeboards.

B.E.F.  
 25. Nov 1928.

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through town. Coming out of 34  
 town they had a couple of men wd -  
 doubt by "m.g.". The Germans  
 however bolted when they saw  
 our men (Barbours) <sup>Co</sup> breaking  
 skirmishing a bit.

My ~~experiences~~ <sup>Experiences</sup> on March 17<sup>th</sup>  
 today are in the two letters I  
 have written today. It is  
 now 6.5 am. on March 18 -  
 Baldwin is going to take his  
 pictures (he came w me to Bapaume  
 and said Brooks) to the censor,  
 & my articles also.  
 I must get to bed.

March 18. Baldwin worked all right &  
 took his photos to J.H.P. with my  
 articles today. Brooks had very  
 meanly, & against all J.H.P.'s own  
 arrangements, got in before him.  
 The light horse went thro'



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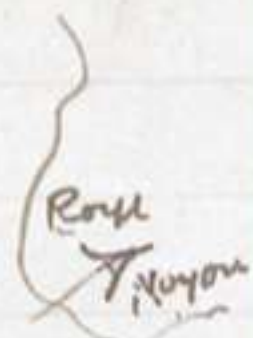
today - & the British & Indian cavalry thro Achiet le Grand got out at the back of the Beupry line - & the Germans have abandoned the Beupry line. Our cavalry is right up to it - killed an officer & took some prisoners in <sup>or near</sup> Pelsart Farm. The officer had an order on him showing that he was intended to hold the line for several days.

The Germans have begun to retreat before the French between Roye & Noyon - Boddy tells me that our back roads are full of big guns streaming N. and not turning off to Arras.

I believe we have saved 3 divisions here already since 1 German began to retire - the 29th & two others; & of course two hours.

Jellibrand is commander of one Adv. guard of all arms; & Elliott of another - they have to keep active touch w/ enemy.

I believe that Bapaume today was like Mainz on a Sunday - not a shot was fired at it. The Germans are





clearly still moving their big guns. Everyone has to Bapaume. Levy came in & said he saw ~~at~~ some of houses had been filled up w wood, tables, chairs - & tar poured over them so that they wd easily burn.

A message came from 4<sup>th</sup> army that some of wells had been found poisoned with arsenic.

German line has begun to retire in part of the trench. Glorious weather.

March 19. With Jellibrand in c. of the northern part of the rear guard I knew we should see some pushing. Our men are beyond Vaulx & the other V. village near it - I forget the name.

Later. Went up with Baldwin to Bapaume. I took the car out along the Northern road from Bap. first - around one big mine crater - but we were blocked by a second one, fair in middle of road, around which they had not managed yet to make a track. We returned to Bap. In the main square, when we turned into it, there



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were half a dozen motor cars. The statue in the centre of square was down & 1 German had put a stove pipe across the pedestal to look like an anti-aircraft gun. I left Baldwin & his man Shirley there - the town still burning or smouldering - & took the car on to the factory on the Beaugnâtre Rd - where fellows and HQs were. I found the old man there in a most palatial depot - with <sup>pink & white silk</sup> curtains drooped & lining the walls - a <sup>plush</sup> settee - & a blue plush table cloth - all cut out of curtains from some French house. We had lunch - him & his family of a staff & myself; & the unselfish old chap gave me a German map which he had looted, obviously, to keep for himself: a real treasure, showing the German idea of their old front & ours & corrected (in true German style) up to 4 p.m. on Feb. 17 last. Travers (of 26 Bn) & Davis (22 Bn) looked in, & Jelly took opportunity of my car being there to send Travers up to see Forbes in Beaugnâtre. It was certainly further than any motor car had ever been towards 1 German. The roads were wonderfully good compared



to the Pozieres - Bapaume Road - & motoring along between green banks & trees had a delightfully fresh feeling - we passed groups of our men in the remains of German depots by roadside - every depot blown down & woodwork apparently taken away. ~~Had~~ The trees in Bapaume cattle market have all been cut down for some reason - & some of trees on the roads inland have been sawn down & left - for some military reason, I do not exactly know what; probably to prevent us from getting out of view of aeroplanes.

We skirted round a crater & passed Favrenil on the left & found ourselves blocked by a crater at the entrance of tiny village of Beugnotre. It was the first time I realised how complete the German demolition had been. He was blowing down every single house as he left the village - The side walls were blown out of



them & the roofs lay flat on the ground. Beugnâtre had been utterly destroyed - He is doing it in order to refuse us billets; & in order, perhaps, to make the French people tired of the war. It is a sight which makes you monstrously angry - this fat-headed wrong-headed race with its <sup>fixed</sup> idea that the smallest military need justifies ~~any~~ even the greatest ~~to~~ civil destruction. If I'm not wrong, tho', he's very mistaken in the French people -

Well - We found Forbes in the one scrap of a house which is left at Beugnâtre - a redbrick place with a gateway about half way up on the right hand side of road. The road was in bad condition here & I Germans had clearly probably so. Let it remain so. ~~But~~ I let my car go back w Travers to Bazoume while Fowler, Jellie's liaison officer & I, walked on to see what we could of the outposts. We had passed with Dyson, walking back along road, & he told us



he had been along to see / cavalry  
patrols, past Vaux or Viancourt.

Nearly the whole of trees were newly  
~~cut~~ sawn down on one side of road here  
past Benquatre - just, lying side by  
side -



Presently we passed the Benquatre  
Ypres line of double trenches, just  
occupied by our infantry. Jelly  
had had sudden orders to  
put 3 battalions, in there instead  
of one. They were two fine  
lines of 200 with good wire in  
front - but no depots. The  
men <sup>21 Bn</sup> were just undercutting  
small shelters in them.

An observer who came w  
us from 21 Bn took us on very  
keen indeed to show us <sup>the post</sup> which he  
had just observed a number of



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Germans from Noreuil or that neighbourhood  
 working over the top of the spur in front of  
 Queant across which 1 rly runs. The boy  
 was exceedingly anxious to show us -  
 very anxious to know if he got the place  
 right. "I shouldn't be satisfied if I didn't  
 think it was right", he sd several times.  
 I told him that as far as I cd see it was  
 exactly the place he had pointed out. We  
 cd see Germans there too, in open order,  
 some of them; & others in close formation.  
 Some seemed to be working on 1 rly  
 on top of hill - possibly they were  
 pulling it up. A train had gone along  
 it.

Jellibrand gave me a German map  
 - a most interesting one - He wanted it badly  
 but he thought I had more use for it, & so  
 I have. He had just received contradictory  
 orders from Brigade - that he was to send 3  
 Battalions in to the Beaugny line - "That  
 must mean, for defence", he sd. He was  
 also to pull in his outposts from beyond  
 March 20. Vaux, I believe. They sent  
 him a "priority" message to this effect  
 at a late hour changing all previous orders.



\* The traffic control men tried to keep 1 traffic in single streams & let it thro' in blocks & for a bit they succeeded. But there were not eno' of them; & while they were elsewhere, it double banked. At abt 11. I walked up it - I was wet through below 1 knee - ankle deep in mud - there was a thin trickle of infantry, relieved, trickling slowly down thro' the block between the 2 lines of traffic where there were two, ~~wandering~~ <sup>threading</sup> in & out where there were not. There was a solid block of men, horse-wagons, led horses, big lorries, tractors & heavy guns, for 3/4 mile. You could find them jammed right up agst one another facing one another across 1 road. The <sup>Australian</sup> police were big fine capable men - & they had some good men & some fair rollers to deal with - I heard one tell a man one a male to stop & hitch on to a stuck wagon. The chap took no notice. "It won't do you any good if I have to pull you off" sd 1 policeman. The man still rode on. The policeman went up & jerked his reins <sup>roughly</sup>. "Why don't you stop when I tell you?" he asked. "I can't hold 'em" replied 1 man - "you bloody babe - you oughtn't to be allowed out" - sd 1 policeman - He let the

ments.

We left Jilly abt 6; - wh we bring us to Poitiers abt 7pm - before dark, where the road was better. But after passing 1 last big crater near Le Sars we ran into a block. It had bn half raining & half snowing, & 1 road was slush. I got out to see what had happened. A big lorry had stuck & its wheels dug in - ~~A tractor brenner~~ two light cars had tried to pass it & each stuck in the soft roadside. A tractor caterpillar bringing down a big gun ~~came down~~ <sup>came down</sup> - I went up & asked him to - & pulled 1 lorry out, & the two cars - & then on 1 way back got stuck himself. Another caterpillar & a big gun broke down on 1 other side of 1 road a few yds from him - a signal lorry broke down further up. Officer of 2nd Div H.Q. & I worked for 3 hours getting the traffic gradually along - then a ~~police~~ traffic officer came & took charge. ~~after 5 hours in blinding rain, I left car & walked to Poitiers & got left back by 1300. Herbertson brought me in bed.~~  
March 20. News that we are in

Noreuil.

later - the Germans threw us out of Noreuil. A patrol reported 1 place clear. We advanced to occupy it when they put up a pretty heavy barrage. 150 men & 6 mps were in the village. We had abt 150 casualties, mostly



chap of bec. time was too serious to waste. I decided from what I saw that there was no chance of my car getting out before dawn - one was walking straight into / noses of males in / dark - all traffic one way was stopped & so we went on / other. So I told Baldwin I wd walk home. He prepared to stay but B. Shirley walked w me - we cleared the block & at Pozieres got a lift & got home at 1.30 am to find Bayley still working & a warm dinner kept for me which we shared.

The car reached home at 4.30 am.

Osborne tells me today the reason of block. It appears that an army commander, Gough, got away from his staff yesterday for half an hour or so up there. He decided that the thing to do was to push on & bombard the Hindenburg line at once w heavy artillery. He ordered every big gun he came across onto the road, with the heavy tractors & lorries (lorries had been ordered off / road as it was known they could not manage it); no one in the Arzac Corps was informed though they controlled / road - & this was / result.

The block was straightened out next afternoon

the road was shut for part of / night for repair  
It took some 2 days to get this.

The 2nd Corps  
is going out;  
5th Corps  
taking over;  
& 50 guns  
are going  
out also.

slight. Our guns are sd to have punished him (The Hun in an order captured on the officer K. in Desaulx farm says that his detachments are to try & deceive us & inflict heavy casualties on us).

We shelled Vanuxem & Vaucourt at the same time.

We withdrew to a line outside Vanuxem & Vaucourt.

The British had much the same experience in Croisilles.

Later we got into Beaumont & were put out there also in a well reinforced c-attack along / rly after dark.

We are getting close to the Hindenburg line now & he can hit back.

We may retire beyond the Hindenburg line. There are indications of it; fires behind / line at Marcoing & one or two suggestions in captured orders.

When we took the 4th Army during / winter the 2 prisoners had sd here



as to be a withdrawal to  
the Cambrai line they wd not  
believe it. "You always hear it  
whenever men are put to work  
on new 2<sup>nd</sup> behind 1 line" they  
sd.

March 21. } we took Beaumonty & then over  
March 22. } turned out of it again.

March 23. We took Beaumonty again.  
This morn. we were to have gone for Noreuil &  
Langatte tomorrow ~~to~~ morning, but the  
attack has been postponed.

I came up to Bapaume to  
stay in the Factory on the Beuvalle  
Rd - a v. good deep dugout - there I  
am writing this in bed. There are 4  
of us in the bunks in this passag.  
- like rough ships bunks. Went today  
round Vank & Vancourt. our  
line is a series of pickets on roads  
& in little posts down in front of  
Noreuil (over the skyline of the contours from  
it, I expect); & a series of supporting  
posts behind it. We saw one of



These - on a road N. of Vraucourt - the  
 Bagnicourt road, I expect it was - with a  
 barricade across the road & the men  
 dug into ditches. The Germans were  
 shelling Vaulx quite constantly. The  
 horse up with the 26<sup>th</sup> Div had his HQ's  
 of 1. 26 ✓ 10 ✓ was hit  
 → one end of it → while we were there,  
 + 3 or 4 shells were put into the corner of  
 road (one into the pond) when we were 100  
 yards away from it. The Germans  
 had been pushing quite a deep rly  
 cutting towards Beugnotre from Vaulx  
 - it was a big work, unfinished. 2

They are a wonderful crowd.  
 Their work is most systematic. They  
 have left a few houses in Vaulx &  
 Vraucourt though they are shelling  
 them now. They always blow up the  
 churches so that we cannot range  
 on them or observe from them; they  
 poured tar over <sup>various</sup> the ruins to make  
 them burn - the tar covered wood & the  
 little tins of tar standing by it were  
 there in several cases.

The earth from dugouts in the



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Bengry line, I noticed, was spread carefully out behind the trench so as not to make a mound. In this factory, under which I write, the earth has been taken out & laid under a big open shed or roof at the back - carried across the yard & laid out there flat; or else heaped inside the walls - so that no one from an aeroplane or an aeroplane photo could notice it.

March 24. Went down to see Jellibrand & get an account of the flight of March 20. The reason for the failure clearly was - he got within a few hours 3 orders from above.

- (1) Follow the enemy energetically.
- (2) Pull back your outposts behind Vaux & Vancourt (He managed to beg off this, partly, & keep 2 corps inst. of 3 out there;
- (3) The Corps Commander wishes you to occupy Noreuil, Lagucourt, & Longatte.

This last arrived at 11 p.m. or 11.30 - just as the last rearrangement had



been completed.

Gelibrand took it to mean - Birdwood wants these villages occupied forthwith - He wd not have sd he wanted them unless he had some object in getting them.

My own belief is th Birdwood & the army hadnt really any fixed policy at all. They had given one originally, in their original instructions to advance guards - but they had received captured orders since, saying th German ws to trap us on every opportunity - & they were half inclined to press on (Jough especially) & half inclined to hold back & be cautious.

Anyway - they sd they wanted it; & Birdie Gelly saw thng must be done by night if at all, as it meant advance apt w.s. fire in the open - & called it on for 3 a.m. It had to be done till 4.30. Then one Coy of 23rd took its way & got along 1 wrong road - almost to Lagnicourt instead of Storcueil - & other Coy of 23rd wh had practically cut off Noreuil was



unsupported & came back.

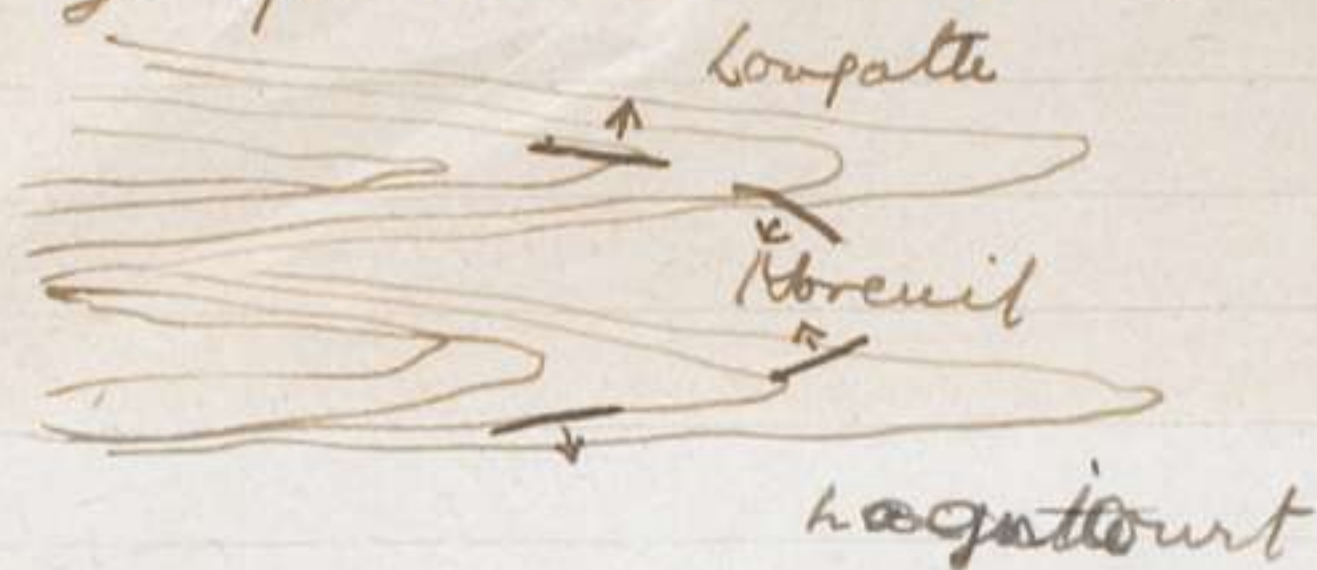
The battalions <sup>had</sup> found it impossible to gather their scattered outposts in 1 dark & 1 rain. But there was no downheartedness. Many of our men enjoyed this fight in 1 open & considering they had had no training in open warfare it was very well carried out; & the breaking off of action & retirement in plain daylight was extraordinarily successful.

Corps - Birdwood & White - who make no allowances for anything but success - are inclined to open their eyes at 1 casualties. But if you say you "want Poreuil & Lagricourt & Lozatte occupied" you can't expect this to <sup>happen</sup> without 1 risk of casualties. If you don't try hard they blame you - quite rightly. If you do make a serious attempt there is no royal road for avoiding casualties, so far as I know. But they do not take this responsibility. White - I daresay White cd plan these things to happen without casualties if he

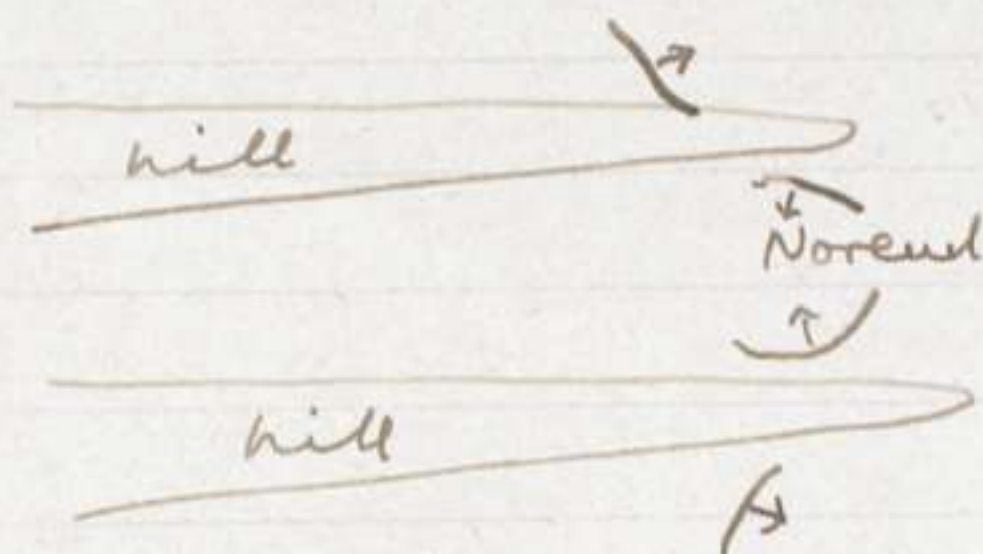


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had time, wh Jelly hadnt. Birdwood couldnt.  
Jelly's idea was roughly:



or more clearly



Noreuil was protected from Lagnicourt & Longatte by hill spurs - He was not being protected either on his right or left flank by 5 Div. or British - so he cd not go for the three places together - but he cd go for the centre one -

The fight must have been a trying one for the 21 & 23 owing to the frequent changes of orders during 1 day - This



74 was partly / result of weakness of  
divisional staff; the general staff of the  
2nd Div is lamentably weak.

March 28 [On the night of March 25 I went  
up to see the Sagnicoart fight.  
Midday next day the depot in  
which was this diary was blown  
up by a German mine with a  
delayed fuse, & two men were  
buried in it. The engineers dug  
for two days & nights until digging  
became very dangerous - when  
at last they had to give it up. They  
had nearly reached the signal room  
in which the sergt & runner were -  
but the roof was in imminent danger  
of collapsing & there was no hope of  
finding the men alive.

Last night <sup>March 27/8</sup> this diary & my  
sleeping bag & suitcase were dug  
out of the debris by Lieut. Warraker  
& his batman.]

I got England tomorrow to get a  
new typewriter etc. The battle of March  
26 is described in my article.