

William Eve's First World War Diary

1914

Sunday 1 November

Left Southampton for Havre at 7 P. M. on the "Maiden" with the Liverpool Scottish.

Monday 2 November

Still on the boat.

Tuesday 3 November

Disembarked at about 8 A.M. Marched 3 ½ miles to a rest camp without a stop, had a rest & grubbed & then fixed up a few tents & and did other Sundry jobs. Retired for the night.

Wednesday 4 November

Left rest camp 3.30 P.M. Marched to station intrained for St Omer. In cattle trucks, 37 in each. Very squashed but had jolly time, people crouched at stations, some bringing us fruit & cake & some had large baskets of bread & butter which they handed along.

Thursday 5 November

Arrived at St Omer 12 P.M. Marched to Barracks about 1 ½ miles. Had some stew & then went to bed.

Friday 6 November

Rally 7.30. Breakfast 8.30. Few fatigues done. Rest of day slack. Went round the town & did a little shopping etc. All in at 8. P.M. Lights out at 10.15.

Saturday 7 November

Paraded sick. Feet bad. Acted unstable for sleeping room.

Sunday 8 November

Practise attack on imaginary artillery. Started 9. A.M. got back at 6. P.M.

Monday 9 November

Went to miniature range at 8.45 A.M. got back at 3.15 P.M. Paraded at 4 o'clock for pay (8 frs) Had some stew & then went out for the evening; having a jolly time. Wrote home.

Tuesday 10 November

Left St. Omer 8.15A.M. for Steemwurck via 'Hazerbruck' . Arrived Hazerbruck at 2.10. P.M. stayed the night. Road very bad cobbles all the way. About 13 miles.

Wednesday 11 November

Left Hazerbruck 9:40 for Bailleul arriving 2.30. P.M. Several fellows fell out. Had 4 stops of 10 minutes. one of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. Roads much better. Slept the night at an old Hospital. Distance about 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

Thursday 12 November

Paraded 9.30. Marched to Erquingham sur la Lys. arrived at 1.30. P.M. Passed a lot of red cross vans with wounded also passed a lot of refugees leaving their homes with their belongings under their arms. Saw several bombs burst a short distance away. Went to our different Barns for billets. Had $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour for dinner & then marched back to be reviewed by Lord Roberts. Sat on the curb waiting about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour, the villagers bringing us coffee. Saw Armonter shelled & in the Evening saw it in flames.

Friday 13 November

Paraded sick. feet bad again. Position 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles from firing line. French on our right. Belgians on our left.

Saturday 14 November

Paraded 9. A.M. Practised field formation under artillery fire until 10 o' clock. Saw aeroplanes fired at. Went into the village in the evening, could get plenty to drink but nothing to eat, the Germans having taken everything. 15 sacks of mail came in at 7. P.M.

Sunday 15 November

Had letter from home. Snowed in the morning while waiting for breakfast.

Monday 16 November

Paraded sick. Had foot bound up. Acted orderly. Received parcel from home.

Tuesday 17 November

Rally 6.30. Paraded sick. Paraded in full marching order at 4.P.M. Marched through villages Bois Grenier that had been shelled, church & houses in ruin. Went to farm about 800 yards from German trenches.

Rested in an outhouse for a $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour, then dug trenches just behind the firing line. Started at 6.15 went on till 10.15. Slept until 2.45. A.M. went on again till about 4.30. A.M. Were fired at several times, the shots at times whistling past pretty thick & some going in the earth just by me. Destination "Grespot".

Wednesday 18 November

Left the farm at about 6.30. Marched back to village to an old laundry for Billet. Cleared it all out went to another farm close by for clean straw.

Had breakfast at 8. A.M.

Slack morning. Had wash & general clean up. Cleaned Rifle. Had a Game of Bridge.

Several aeroplanes overhead fired at. Large guns continually firing close by. Dinner 2. P.M. Fourty winks at 3. P.M. Tea at 4.30. Rested till 8. P.M. Tucked in with George under the same blanket.

Went to bed at 8.30. Sent letter home.

Thursday 19 November

Parade in Billets in full marching order at 6. A.M. stand by till 7. A.M.

Breakfast at 8.30.

Rifle inspection at 10. Slack until dinner. Snowing fast all the morning. Mail given out. No letters. After dinner had game of bridge. Slack all the afternoon. 11.30. P.M. Big rifle fire started just outside, all called up packed all our things made a bandakin of our blanket & stood by, after told alls well & that we could go back to bed, but all N.C.O. to keep their boots on.

Friday 20 November

Rally as usual. Rifle inspection at 10. A.M.

Wrote 6th letter Home.

Wasn't posted.

Marched to the trenches at 5.15. Trenches went right along connecting up to the firing line. Told off in 3s & 4". We were in 4". 2 hours on Guard & 6 hrs off. First guard 8. P.M.

Saturday 21 November

My first 2-4 & then 10-12. All in little dugouts for sleep mine being an officers, have to shift at midday. Have just done a little sniping in return for the others. We then got 4 coalboxes from them (Jack Johnsons.) Were expecting an attack on our right at about 6. P.M. didn't come off. Caught cold. was rather sick at about 10. P.M.

Sunday 22 November

Went on guard at 1.45. A.M.- 3.45 & then again from 6-6.30. A.M. One of the East Yorks shot in the head while getting water with two others. Had letter from home & from Gerald. Trenches on fire at our rear at 4.50. Relieved from trenches at 8. P.M. Marched right back along communication trenches to cottages by Head Quarters. 13 of us lived in a shop, looked it before going to bed finding a variety of articles.

Also a notice asking us to feed a little pet dog on the premises. I wound in at about 11. P.M.

Monday 23 November

Got up at about 8. A.M. Had a ripping breakfast of bacon & fried potatoes finishing at about 9:40. Cleared up, cleaned all rifles for inspection, then saw Doctor about my ankle. Had letter from Jack & Elsa Gertie. Then sat down to stew for dinner. After wrote letter to Gertie & Elsa & finished one for home. At about 4 had a good wash & a shave, after sat down all together by the fire with two oil lamps & smoked & had tea. Had a very jolly evening.

Tuesday 24 November

Packed up ready to go to trenches, put a lot of potatoes & onions in pack. Had a good look round shop before leaving for trenches. Passed the regulars (The East Yorks) who we were relieving. Got into very comfortable quarters, pack having a bunk. Were sniped at a bit while coming in. Guard at night 1 hour on & 2 off. Raised rather fast part of the time.

Wednesday 25 November

All as usual. Started a trench. Ground filthy. a lot of sniping going on all day. Went with fatigue party to get wood at farm. Guard 2 hours on & 4 off. Went for 4 hours first time counting the stand too. Gig crim went on on our left & right. Unfixed bayonets as bright moon light night.

Thursday 26 November

Stand too as usual.

Helped fetch days rations. Brought back rum. Complaint made about food only about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a loaf & 2 biscuits one large tin of bully for 3 & $\frac{2}{3}$ of a tin of jam for a day. 10.15. A.M. just going to have 40 winks. Left trenches at 4.30 for sap for the night. The sap is about 20 yards in front of the trenches just behind the wire in tanglement. All slosh going to in fearful bad there. Two big scraps took place during the night. Rained part of the time.

Friday 27 November

On returning in the morning found a lot of the bunks had fallen in caused through the change in weather, everything in a filthy state all mud. Brooks a fellow in 11 Co. found in the morning buried alive. Short rations again, complaint made. Sent F.S. card home. Brooks buried at farm at our rear.

Saturday 28 November

Busy all day at building bunk. Several shells (German) fell just at our rear. One about 20 yards in front. Had issue of cigarettes, one packed from Lloyds news & one from Weekly Dispatch.

Sunday 29 November

Had a nice chat with one of the East Yorks. Trenches falling in everywhere; nothing but slosh. Joined in with Prayer at five minutes to eleven. (30m) 2 of our fellows (30 in) took two prisoners, 5 Germans advanced towards our trenches when challenged 2 surrendered the others ran away 1 being shot.

Monday 30 November

Had chocolate from Gertie 4 of our fellows (w) founded one in the stomach who died later.

Tuesday 1 December

Had 4 packets of cigarettes each. Had letter from Mary. Several shells fired at our batteries behind one blackening a sick about 50 yards at our rear (Paid 20frs.) Paraded sick in the evening. At 5. P.M. marched with two other fellows to the dressing station, just got into ditch in time as shots poured over our heads. One asked me if I knew Eve. he had been told I was by a Mrs Robinson who knows Mrs Cok. Saw Doc, gave me a pill for strained foot. Went into cottage on the way back & had coffee + inlathe?, left address they are writing home. Then went in a farm with some RFA fellows, had some tea etc got back 12. P.M.

Wednesday 2 December

One from each platoon paraded to be reviewed by the King. Walked with faith to the Doctors, went the wrong road got lost eventually finding our way, felt very rotten. Went to cottage to have something to eat but they had gone to bed. Got back at 10.15.

Had parcel from home & from Elsa.

Thursday 3 December

Laid quiet as feeling very rotten. A lot of sniping going on 2 of our chaps being wounded.

Friday 4 December

One of our fellows shot in the head while cleaning his pipe. Was buried in the evening. Washout signal given by the enemy when one or two of our shots missed. Stand to at 4.30. At about 5 & at rifle being fired on our left eve fired 2 rounds sniped at given point where they were mending wire. Twice after at rocket going up, we repeated it. No alarm. On guard for 6 hours.

Saturday 5 December

Stand too as usual. Field service telephone brought in, connecting with our battery which is going to shell the trenches in front. Very good effect, went right in the trenches. Trenches falling in everywhere. raining hard, water over boots. Started leaving at 5.15 got out at 6.45, in some places the water came half up our legs. Marched about 3 miles to barn billets, clean up. then had to go on guard (24 hour.) with George.

Sunday 6 December

Nton (?) on guard at about 6. A.M. had coffee given us from several of the cottages, also some biscuits from the store room. New guard at 8. P.M. George & I then went to shop & got Sardines & bread & butter & sweets? jam & bread (?) Returned for the night at about 10.

Monday 7 December

Breakfast 8.15. Had sardines. Maconica stew, bread & butter & jam, & tea. Paraded sick, cold in stomach, generally rotten. After bought some cakes & apples, then went to Astamna had coffee & shave. Had letter & parcel from home.

Tuesday 8 December

Opened parcel. Ripping contents. Paraded sick. halfed cooks.

Wednesday 9 December

Paraded sick had foot rebound, & had 4 pills for (Dr.) Went into cottage & had 4 buttons put on coat, Had letter ready for home, but they would only take cards. Marched to trenches, relieving the "Durhams" arriving about 7. P.M. The trenches in awful state water & mud over our boots, I & one other got in dig-out flooded & foot of water at entrance, had tin of sardines & then turned in with five others in another one, The reserve trenches.

Thursday 10 December

We were shifted in the morning to another place opposite the officers quarters, "Grand Hotel". The next turning on our right leading to the firing line being the "Old Kent Road". Stayed 2mill? all the rest of the day.

Friday 11 December

Quiet most of the day nothing to note. Had letter from home & air cushion & batteries. had good nights sleep, although water trickling through but had ground sheet on some some so kept dry. Oh! Had telephone message to take to no1 Co. in firing line as we were made telephone boys it being fixed up in our dugout. Raining

fast & in places since? deep in water, lost my way, got back with difficulties, sopping wet.

Saturday 12 December

All as usual, water & mud worse than ever. Drew rations for day. One shell in the afternoon fell about 50 yards behind us no damage. Captain Hinriekes kindly sensed my letter of the 9th & commended the little news? I had put in, & asked if I thought the fellows would like a service. Went on great fatigue, went into Astamna at Head Quarters with Coxon & one or two others had coffee & bread & jam, coming back slipped down hole in road.

Sunday 13 December

All as usual, helped scoop up mud in the Old Kent Road. Were called out to "Stand to" at about 10.45, a bit of wind getting up on our right. Everywhere in a shocking state. While clearing the mud several German shells fell where we were digging, a time fuse striking about a foot from Car's? head- which he picked up, it was passed on to our battery as by it they can get the range of the enemys guns

Monday 14 December

Raining part of the morning, water in places knee deep. Engineers say it is almost impossible to improve them. Had letter from Mary. Went out on ration fatigue at 7. P.M. got back at about 10.

Tuesday 15 December

Had to go on fatigue to fetch facines & blankets/plants? at 6. P.M. just got back as it was getting light. Had letter from Dad.

Wednesday 16 December

Had letter from Mother. Sniping very heavy all day, the enemy making 4 inch groups at our pump hitting the water bottles. Sent Army P.C. home & one to Clarke & Co. One or two scraps took place on our left & right during the night.

Thursday 17 December

Got water first thing. Sniping only slight.

Friday 18 December

Left trenches at 6. A.M. for Billets, arriving at about 7.30 in Armentier.

Saturday 19 December

We were shelled heavily one bursting within 4 yards of our trench in the garden, one also bursting in one of the Billets killing one of our chaps. was in Astamana at time.

Sunday 20 December

Had pudding & chocolate from Aunt Bessy. Communion at 11. A.M. Service conducted by the Army Chaplain. Had Xmas feast in the evening given by Mr Lus. Ripast consisted of : - Chicken + sausage + bread & butter. Xmas pudding. Ginger cake. Biscuits & Ginger. Almonds & Raisons. Red & white wine & rum. Preserved fruits & figs. Peppermint sweets. Crackers. Cigarettes. I wound in at 12.30. P.M. Had letter from Jack.

Monday 21 December

Had cakes & chocolate from Elsa & parcel from Hubert.

Tuesday 22 December

Cleared up ready to leave. Had coffee at Astamane at about 1.30. had dinner at 2.30.

Wednesday 23 December

Left at 4.10 A.M. from Billets for trenches. Trenches in shocking state water knee deep. Had to walk on sort of rafts which when stepped on sank about 6 inches. being slippery one or two slipped in the water going in places up to their knees & some falling flat down.

Thursday 24 December

One of our fellows named "Tate" killed while bringing in rations just before dawn. Shot in the head just close to our digout. Sergeant Rogers shot in the chest & Mat shot in the knee while going to help. Had first war on stuff? at 1 o'clock. cup of cocoa & biscuits. One Battery behind just started to shell the German lines.

***Christmas Day.* Friday 25 December**

At beginning of day respect for Xmas shown. On both sides fellows stood on the parapet & struck matches & shouted across greetings to each other. When it got light everybody strolled about conversed with the Germans, exchanged souvenirs, played football, & not a shot fired all day or night. beautiful day, white frost.

***Boxing Day.* Saturday 26 December**

Stand too 4.30. Left trenches for Billets at "Houplines" 4 ½ miles at 4.45. relieved by the Fusiliers. Not a shot fired while leaving. Ripping march through to Billets, a factory in the town. Went out & had a ripping dinner, pork & eggs + coffee. Xmas pudding when got back. Had gift from Princess Mary. box with Pipe & tobacco & case with tobacco & cigarettes.

Sunday 27 December

Had hamper from home + cigarettes & chocolate from Coynes. Had 2 boiled eggs for breakfast. Concert in the evening

Monday 28 December

Left with party of 12 for pumping for baths about 2 miles away at Laundry in "Bizet" on the River Lys. Had difficulty in finding place, hat blew off, & in trying to find it went knee deep in water. Went in Astamana for some breakfast at interval of pumping.

Tuesday 29 December

Went on Rout march. about 6 miles stopped for ½ an hour at La Bizil. "Armontiers" Went in "Astamand" with George, & had a look round.

Wednesday 30 December

Had letter from home with Lipperts letter. Sent letter home. Was day orderly. Paraded at 5. P.M. for digging. was grand night, did good nights wash. Had pass for Armentiers but only went part way.

Thursday 31 December

Paraded at 10.30 for Frontier Guard at bridge on River Lys which divides France & Belgium, "Houplines" this sick + nobody to go either way without a pass not more than 10 days old. All motors to be stopped + carts to be examined. Motor no 2092.G. to be fired on. Whitmarsh no.693. of the Royal Flying Corp. to be taken prisoner.

Had new hat issued. Guard 1.15 – 3.15 + 9.15 – 11.15.