

Allan Lee: 1918 Diaries



Lance Corporal Allan Lee
No. 1 Company, 4th Battalion
Grenadier Guards
British Expeditionary Force
France

Introduction and Diary Transcripts

Introduction

Source material

The two diaries kept by Allan during 1918 are the main source material. The diary covering the period January 1st 1918 to April 12th 1918 is one of the widely issued "The 'Allies' Diary for 1918". The diary is small (95mm x 65mm) but there is a full page for each day. Allan used pencil or pen and he made an entry for each day until April 12th. The other diary is a simple blue notebook with lined pages. It is a record in pencil and ink of Allan's experiences as a PoW and runs from April 13th to November 29th when he was discharged in Ripon.

The entries in both diaries range from clear and easy to read to faded and/or illegible. What is remarkable is that he kept a daily entry even at times of what must have been extreme stress. The diaries mostly record simple facts. There is little sense of Allan's own views or opinions about what he was experiencing. Food is a preoccupation throughout and particularly during his time as a PoW. The detailed recording of food in the blue diary would have been done as part of a record of how the Germans were treating the PoWs.

The entries were necessarily short in each diary and there was little scope for wordy introspection. However the entries sometimes give the sense of a much bigger personal story or tragedy hiding behind a single stark sentence. For example, Allan's entry on 29th May in his "PoW Diary" says 'Filling coal Englishman killed last night.' This PoW would have survived one or more battles, had been captured, and possibly wounded, survived the privations of the PoW camp and then sent to work in a German coal mine – only to die in a mining accident. The entries in the diary can also be very poignant. For example the last entry in the "War Diary" on April 12th, the day before Allan was captured in a major battle with the advancing Germans, reads "Jackson and I dug in. Had a wet trench. A lovely sunny day".

The other unpublished source material came from the archives of the Grenadier Guards. The archivist supplied four documents – Allan's Military History sheet, his Short Service sheet, his Enlistment sheet and his Statement of Services sheet.

The main published source material is the "The Grenadier Guards in the Great War 1914-1918" by Frederick Ponsonby. This is the war diary of the regiment published in 1920 in three volumes. It is very useful for the wider regimental context of a particular action, for confirming events described in Allan's war diary and for helping to identify particular places. Allan's diary sometimes records places by the phonetic spelling of the army's slang name for a town or camp. For example, "Vampoo" in the diary is a place called Fampoux.

There is no official diary for Allan's time as a PoW but "The War Behind The Wire – The Life Death and Glory of British Prisoners of War 1914-1918" by John Lewis-Stempel (2014) is an excellent introduction to the subject. Unlike officers, privates and non-commissioned officers were put to work wherever possible. Allan may have been a Lance Corporal but he was sent to work as a coal miner.

Pre 1918

Allan joined the army in Pontefract on 10th November 1914. He was sworn in and passed fit for service. Before that he had been a miner living and working in North Skelton, near Middlesbrough. North Skelton was the site of one of the deepest iron ore mines in the country and the work would have been very demanding physically and very dangerous. His next of kin listed on his Military History sheet is his mother, Ada Lee, with an address in Fitzwilliam. This is also given as his home address in the "War Diary". On 11th November 1914, the day after enlistment, he began his basic training in the Guards training depot at Caterham in Surrey. Allan was 19 years old.

Allan had joined one of the elite regiments of the British Army. The Grenadier Guards normally consisted of three service battalions but in 1914 the decision was made to raise a fourth service battalion. Allan was assigned to 1st Company 4th Battalion. Caterham was the main training barracks for all the Guards regiments and it is reasonable to assume that Alan was stationed there throughout his basic training.

The regiment was involved in the war in France as part of the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) from August 1914 onwards but the 4th Battalion did not reach France until August 1915. The 4th Battalion's first major engagement was the Battle of Loos (25th September to 8th October) in 1915. However Allan, according to his Military History sheet, did not leave for France until 5th October, and is therefore unlikely to have joined the Battalion before the end of the battle. This was fortunate. The Ponsonby history (Volume 1 pp.318-319) records that casualties (those gassed, killed or wounded) were very heavy. The non-officer ranks had a casualty rate of almost 40% (364 men) and the officers of over 50% (11 of 20 officers).

Allan must have performed well as a soldier during the rest of 1915 and the first part of 1916. He was appointed a Lance Corporal in the field on 24th July 1916. His life would have been one of rotating trench warfare during this time. Frontline troops would spend two to four days in the forward positions and then be rotated to the reserve trenches or to the rear for rest and recuperation for another two to four days until returning to the front line.

The next major battle for Allan and the 4th Battalion was the Somme (1st July to 18th November 1916). Allan was wounded at the assault on Les Boeufs on 25th September. He had a gunshot wound to his back, head and hand. Again the casualties were very high. From 18th to 26th September, 13 of 15 officers were casualties and 445 men (Ponsonby Volume 2 p143). Allan was returned home to England on 16th October presumably after three weeks in a field hospital.

In a brief note in his "War Diary" Allan wrote that he left hospital in England in January 1917 (he does not say which hospital). He spent his convalescence in Seaford in Sussex, probably at the Seaside Convalescence Home. In April he left Seaford, presumably fully recovered, and went to the Chelsea Barracks in London. On August 8th he was confirmed in the rank of Lance Corporal and three days later, on 11th, he left for France to rejoin the 4th Battalion.

The Grenadier Guards were based at Penton Camp near Proven in Belgium for much of August 1917. The 4th Battalion was back to full strength with the return of wounded soldiers like Allan and the influx of new recruits. The battalion consisted of 32 officers and 882 men at this time. It saw further action in the Battle of Passchendale (31st July to 10th November) and in the Battle of Cambrai (20th November to 6th December).

By the time Allan began writing his diary, he was already a very experienced soldier who had fought in three of the major battles of the war. As a Lance Corporal he would have responsibility for privates in his section. He was 22 years old.

War Diary January to April 1918

Trench Life

Allan's brief diary entries, in his matter of fact style, portray a life in the trenches that was cold, wet and physically demanding. It was also very dangerous. Much of his time seems to have been spent repairing whichever trench network he happened to be in or on guard duty. He would have led a nocturnal life mostly. It was too dangerous to be active in the trenches during daylight because of sniper fire. But there were attacks at night by the Germans too. On 6th January a sergeant and two corporals of 4th Company were killed as well as the company CO being wounded. Allan's section recovered one of the wounded. The official Ponsonby history (Volume 2 p381) confirms that this was an attack using a grenatenwerfer, a grenade mortar developed for trench warfare.

It was also at night that either side would raid enemy lines in an attempt to capture prisoners for interrogation or to reconnoiter to gather intelligence. Allan notes a major night raid by the Germans on 19th February with six killed. The Ponsonby history (Volume 3 pp2-7) describes this attack by sixty enemy troops in great detail. Allan would go out on such information gathering patrols as well. He gives an example of one on 24th March where he "went on a patrol with 7 men to see if Fritz was making a jumping off place".

Reserve Life

Front Line regiments were regularly rotated between the front line, reserve trenches and the camps or barracks at the rear. Most of Allan's time in the first part of 1918 was spent either in reserve trenches (still very dangerous) or in the rear areas rather than the most forward positions in the front line. The British army had accepted that men, even those in the elite regiments like the Grenadier Guards, could operate effectively only for short periods of time in the front line.

Life outside of the front line had a particular routine and rhythm. There were regular parades and inspections. The men were inspected for their health, cleanliness and the state of their kit (boots, clothes and weapons). They could also have a bath. There was regular drill and further training. Allan went on a bombing course in Levis Barracks in Arras from 4th to 9th February. There were also opportunities to go out in the evening in Arras and other nearby towns to spend some of the money they had been paid. Other leisure activities included concerts by regimental bands and a cinema.

Allan's consuming interest (or distraction) was sport. Boxing and football were constant activities when he was in reserve. There was clearly great rivalry

between different regiments and also between companies in the same regiment. On 16th January he even appears to have been rotated early from the front line to play in a football match. Football scores appear regularly in the diary.

Discipline

Allan may have been a very experienced soldier by 1918 but he was not a perfect one. He had a particularly difficult time at the end of January. On 20th he had his name taken by his sergeant for mounting a picket with a rusty rifle. On 27th he was caught napping by his Captain while on trench duty, and on 1st February he was placed under close arrest, again by his sergeant, for not wearing his steel helmet. The first offence happened when Allan was in the barracks in Arras, and the other two at the Front Line. Effectively, Allan seems to have been on a charge for these offences and he was officially “admonished for trench business” on 9th February after his bombing course in Arras. He then continued his duties as normal. Discipline appears to have been strict but the punishments for infractions were not unreasonable. It seems that a strict telling off was considered punishment enough for an experienced soldier like Allan.

The Spring Offensive

On March 21st the Germans launched their last major offensive of the war. It was their attempt to bring the Allies to the negotiating table ahead of the full involvement of the American forces in the war. The 4th Battalion of the Grenadier Guards was in the thick of the fighting.

In his entry for 21st March Allan notes that there was “plenty of word about German attacks”. There then followed what the Ponsonby history calls “ten strenuous days’ fighting, digging, and marching in open warfare” (Volume 3 p.7). Allan’s diary captured the chaos of fighting in a desperate defensive action. The fighting began after a lengthy journey (because of delays) by bus. Allan’s days and nights now consisted of repeatedly digging in, repulsing attacks, retiring back (according to regimental tradition the Guards retire – they do not retreat), digging in again, and repulsing more attacks. He also had to suffer being regularly shelled by his own artillery as well as by the Germans. Ponsonby described them as “dead beat” (volume 3 p.13) after retiring and fighting over the six miles from Ervillers to Douchy-Les-Ayettes. However, despite the intense fighting, 4th Battalion’s casualties were relatively low (4 officers and 75 other ranks). The Battalion was relieved on March 31st and eventually returned to camp in Bethencourt after another interminable bus journey.

The first week in April was spent having parades, playing football and resting. On 7th Allan noted that the Germans had broken through again at Festubert and on 9th April the 4th Battalion began another time consuming journey to the front line. There was continual fighting from 11th April onwards although according to his diary Allan did not face a German attack until 12th April. Ponsonby describes “heaps of German dead” in front of the British positions during a detailed description of the fighting from 11th to 13th (Volume 3 pp40-48). The Battalion was hemorrhaging men too. On 11th April it suffered 280 casualties including 8 officers. By nightfall on 12th April there were only 9 officers and 180 men left to fight. This remainder of the Battalion took up new positions near La Couronne to prepare for the fighting on 13th April. The men were too exhausted to dig slit trenches and so were allowed to dig simple rifle pits.

The Germans began their attack at 6.30am. During the course of the fighting the Guards' defensive positions were gradually overwhelmed and surrounded by the far larger German force. All the officers in No1 Company were killed or wounded. Only 2 of 19 officers in the 4th Battalion were left after the battle. The total casualties were 504, or 90% of its strength. Although the Battalion was almost completely wiped out, the defensive action was successful in holding up the German advance. Allan Lee was captured and made a prisoner of war.

Prisoner of War

Allan was originally posted as "Missing" after the battle at La Couronne but on his service history, this is crossed out and replaced with "Next of Kin Notified 10 May 1918" and "Prisoner of War". However it is not clear whether the family were notified initially that he was missing and then later that he was a PoW. We do know from the diaries that he had begun writing home by 28th April and that he was receiving mail from home by the summer.

Allan was captured with soldiers from his own section. Their names were listed in the blue notebook. Some of the soldiers, like Goldsmith and Milburn, were mentioned in the earlier diary too.

The most dangerous time for a PoW was at the moment of surrender or in the days immediately afterwards. Apart from the dangers of being shot by the enemy there was always the possibility of being hit by your own side while you were still near the front lines. It was also very confusing and disorienting for captured soldiers. Allan's diary reflects this. He was confused at times about where they actually were. In the first week they were held at Fournes-en-Weppes but Allan thought they were in Lille (Allan wrote Fournes in the margin at a later date). They actually reached Lille on either 18th or 19th of April when Allan writes Fort McDonald above the entry for 19th. The confusion would have exacerbated by the customary poor treatment of British PoWs by the Germans. Allan's diary records examples of this. They were searched on their second day of captivity. This would have been taken as an opportunity by their guards to take whatever they wanted. The rations, if they got any, were wholly inadequate. On 17th April the prisoners had to sleep on top of each other, either to keep warm or because they were forced into a small space. The prison at Fort McDonald was known as "The Black Hole Of Lille" because of the appalling conditions. Allan wrote that they had to stay by the latrines.

Allan was held at Fort McDonald until 21st April. He then travelled by train to Haltern and was marched to Dulmen PoW camp. On 24th May he had his boots taken. This was a regular occurrence because the British had much better boots than their guards. On 8th May the Germans, in Allan's words "Took particulars with regard to mining", and on May 24th he was sent to Herten-Westerholt to mine coal.

PoW Life

Lewis-Stempel's history of the British PoWs provides some of the detail lacking in Allan's brief diary entries. The Germans provided only a starvation diet to the PoWs, even if they were doing forced labour or, like Allan, working in a mine. Initially Allan recorded what the Germans gave him each day. The coffee he

refers to would have been ersatz coffee made from acorns, the bread would have been black bread made from bran and potatoes, and the soup would have been cabbage water or similar. Allan describes kit being exchanged or sold for food (21st April) when the Germans failed to feed the prisoners. The prisoners would have been permanently hungry.

The arrival of Red Cross parcels (and later parcels from home as well) made a huge difference to the diet and wellbeing of the PoWs. The aim of the Red Cross Care Committee was to supply three 10lb parcels and 13lb of bread to each man every fortnight. A typical parcel would include a variety of tinned goods including meat, vegetables, cheese, and condensed milk. There were also usually biscuits, jam, tea, cigarettes and soap. Allan lists the contents of a particular parcel on 4th May: "2 tins cheese, 1 tin milk, 1 tin beef, 1 tin mutton, 1 tin dripping, 1 tin cocoa, 1 pkt tea, 4 pkts biscuits". From June to September Allan meticulously recorded the arrival of each grocery parcel. He was ill for part of October with "a poisoned leg" and seems to have stopped recording the arrival of each parcel. He listed the parcels as evidence of what he had actually received. At some future point this list could be compared with what was actually sent to him. This might have been necessary to prove or disprove the theft of parcels by the German authorities.

On May 29th he noted the death of an English PoW working in the mine. This must have been a stark reminder of the dangers Allan and other POWs still faced. The harsh living and working conditions combined with a very poor diet and a brutal prison regime took a very high toll. Lewis-Stempel has estimated that "Overall, about 10.3% of British PoWs taken captive died whilst captive in Germany"

From June 1918 the PoW diary entries become much briefer with whole weeks summarized in a couple of lines. Food remains of central importance and the Red Cross parcels are still recorded. Allan's life had assumed a routine of working in the mines (often on a double shift) every day including Sundays. Sunday was also the day for letter writing. He mentions writing to "Beatty" on three occasions. It is probably safe to assume that this is Beatrice Roberts whom he married in August 1920. Allan had recovered from his "poisoned leg" by November and was back in the mines when the war ended.

Release

Allan marked Armistice Day on 11th November with a single line "Revolutions in Germany no work at the mine". Although work did resume for a few days, by 15th November the PoWs were refusing to work anymore. They were put on coal trucks on 19th with "heaps of food and cigs" and on 21st eventually arrived in Rotterdam after travelling through the Ruhr and Holland, mostly by train. He had to wait at the docks for three days (but he did manage to have a night out on the town) before boarding a transport ship for Hull on 25th. The SS Huntsgreen docked in Hull on 28th and on 29th Allan was discharged in Ripon. The last entry reads "Medical inspection morning and afternoon drew £2.10s".

Transcripts

List of common army abbreviations and terms used in the diaries:

BHQ: Battalion Head Quarters

Batt: Battalion

Break: Breakfast

Brig: Brigade

Capt: Captain

CO: Commanding Officer

Coy or coy: Company

Cpl or cpl: Corporal

Div: Divisional

Gds: Guards

Gen: General

HQ: Headquarters

Inspec: Inspection

Maj: Major

Payed: paid

Pde or pde: Parade

Plat: Platoon

Res or res: Reserve e.g. reserve trench

Sgt or sgt: Sergeant

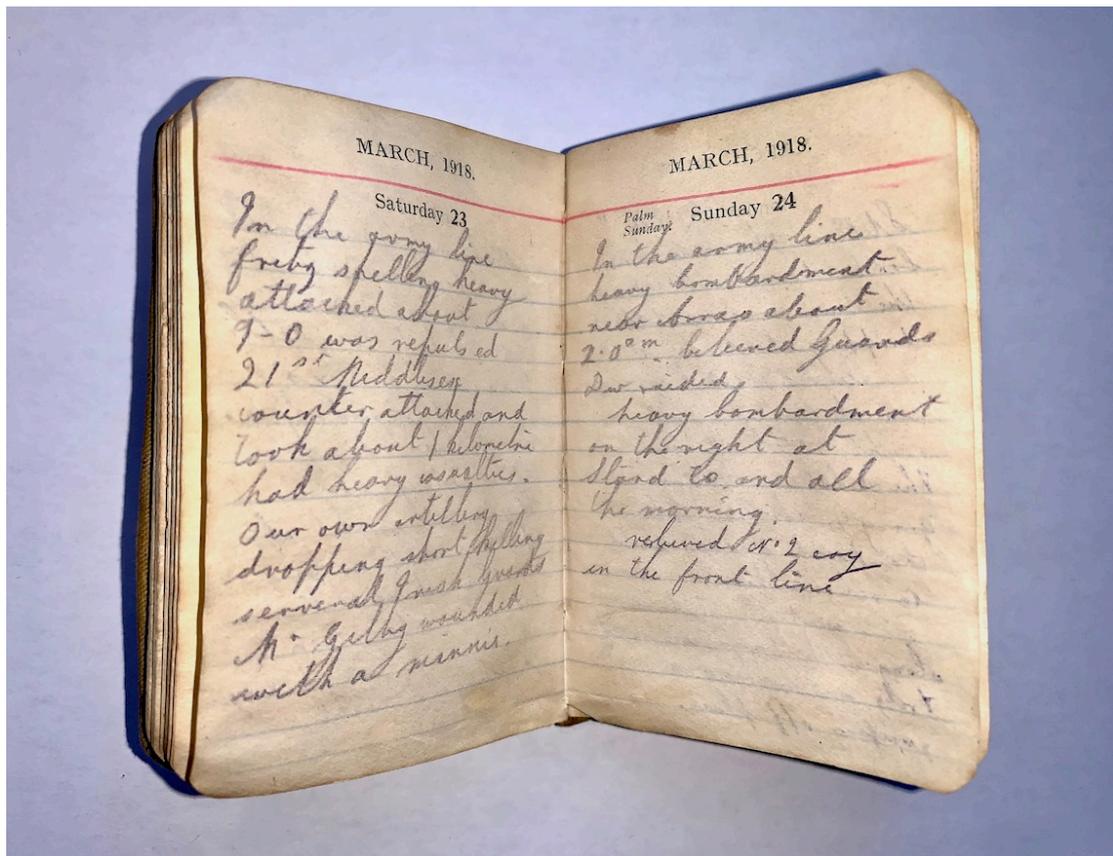
SMO: Senior Medical Officer

Note:

[] = clarifications/correct spellings/ place names

[?] = illegible/difficult to read

Allies Diary For 1918: January to April 1918



Diary Transcript: Allies Diary For 1918: January to April 1918

January 1918

Tuesday 1st

Entrained Dainville 10am

Got off at Cam valley [*Athies*] and took over a position from the Scottish Rifles just in front of Vampoo [*Fampoux*], Arras Sector.

German aeroplane came down by machine gun fire from our airman

Aviator fell out of his machine at a great height 2 airmen fell out

Got lost going in

¼ of a loaf for 2 days

Wednesday 2nd

Still in Vampoo position everything quiet

Gibson went on leave [*this is crossed out*]

Sawkhill, Dyer went on leave

Name of trench Colt reserve

Cooks in the trenches

Sgt Watson went to 3 coy

Real French name Fampoase [*Fampoux*]

Thursday 3rd

Still in Vampoo Colt Res position

Nothing unusual to report

Gibson went on leave

Went down to BHQ to go out but was sent back

I was on Gas Guard with Jackson, Milburn, Cox

Friday 4th

Still in Vampoo Colt Res position doing plenty of fatigues,

Went down to BHQ saw captured Howitzers

IO [*Intelligence Officer?*] in a loaf [?]

Howitzers were captured by Northhamptons together with gun carriages

Saturday 5th

In Colt Reserve trench on Gas Guard with Jackson, Milburn and Cox.

Left Colt reserve and relieved Kings Coy in Cadiz Reserve and dismounted guard at 9pm.

Slept at night with boots and socks off in deep dug out.

Sunday 6th

Still in Cadiz reserve gas helmet drill in the morning sleep in the afternoon

Took up 4 Coys rations up at night got lost and travelled the whole front of 2 and 4 Coys Sgt Maj Stretton, Sgt Walton and cpl Long killed. Stretcher bearers of my party brought one of them down that night got back at 2.30 in the morning.

Monday 7th

Came off fatigues 2.30am stood to at 6am

On fatigues after breakfast repairing trench that had been blown in by a shell, slept in the afternoon on fatigues at night till 9pm had cocoa all [?] paste [?] relieved cpl Atkins on Guard after supper Milburn went on leave.

Tuesday 8th

On guard with Arthurs Boswell and Evans. Coy on fatigues repairing trench snowed morning and afternoon. Joe Taylor went on leave. Fred Pugh relieved me about 12 midnight freezing like the devil. Coy on fatigue taking rations up previous to relieving me [?]
Had letters from home North Skelton and Nellie.

Wednesday 9th

In Cadiz trench stood to at 6. Repairing duck boards putting wire on duck boards before dinner, relieved by 1st battalion and went out for 4 days rest on Lambon [?] Road Candy [?] [*This is the support line*]
Snowing hard we had 1 blanket draft joined no Sgt Perkins

Thursday 10th

Still in same position showed rifles at 9.15 in Sunken road went for bath in the afternoon had a good night's sleep couldn't get any candles, had a good view of John's line, artillery and aerial activity

Friday 11th

In the same position showed rifles and khaki clean in the morning and we were payed before dinner I went to Colt reserve to canteen but had no luck, came back and was on fatigue with the coy repairing the trench played at cards and lost about 8 francs. Got payed 15 francs.

Saturday 12th

In the same reserve trench showed rifles in the morning and then went on fatigues carrying Jack boots [*combat boots*] from Bn [*Battalion*] HQ to dump and then had dinner. nothing doing in the afternoon after tea had a lecture about the posts we were taking over on the front line, trench discipline being most prominent got down to it early Cpl Atkins and I in dug out.

Sunday 13th

In the same trench drew whale oil, rifle oil and cigs for the trenches then packed up ready for moving off plenty of aeroplanes flying about sunny morning. Parade 4.10 Sunken road relieved Kings Coy in the front line at 7.0 freezing hard all night.

Monday 14th

In the front line No 7 post started snowing early in the morning and kept on all day. Trench duty from 2am to 6am allowed in shelters by day not allowed to smoke at night and not allowed in shelters

Tuesday 15th

In no 7 post freezing through the night and then started to rain trench began to fall in in the afternoon, stood to at 5pm, a rainy miserable night, stood to in the morn at 4.30 carried on at 7.0 bobbing on a bomb attack, raining at night.

Wednesday 16th

In the front line raining and snowing all night trench impossible to get along, had to go over the top. Came out at 5.30 at night to go out and play football, came down with ration train drew rations of whizz bang for footballers and went to prison for blankets got down about 12 in Arras.

Thursday 17th

Breakfast at 8am Arras showed ourselves clean and rifles at 10am, had a lot down with trench foot from No2 platoon.

Went to the prison in the afternoon and took billets over. I was in a small cell with four beds in. Went to bed early and left a good fire for the boys.

Friday 18th

In the prison at Arras the platoon arrived about 2.0, had tea and rum and then got down reveille 12 midday dinner 12.30 troops cleaning up remainder of the day played the 2nd Batt in divisional cup and last feet inspection at 5 went into Arras at night bought a write pad, lights out 9.0 o'clock.

Saturday 19th

Reveille 7.0 Breakfast 7.45 parade 9.30 show ourselves clean had steady drill dinner 12 o'clock payed out at 1.30 went out at night in Arras and had a good time.

Sunday 20th

In the prison Arras. Reveille 7.0 Church parade 9.30 Irish Guards band played at the service.

Mounted picket at 4.0 o'clock with Sgt Perkins took my name mounting rusty rifle.

Monday 21st

Reveille 7.0 Breakfast 7.15

½ of hours gyms I didn't attend rained in the morning had a parade against the execution room lecture by Mr Osbourne plenty of promotion at C.O.'s this day.

Tuesday 22nd

In the prison Arras. Reveille 7.0 Break 7.15 didn't have it had a bath and clean change in the Grand Place Arras parade from 10. 12 bayonet fighting, played football in the afternoon. Right half v left half we lost 4-0. Harrod and I went to Dainville at night lasting 9.15

Shipman Harrod MPA [?]

Wednesday 23rd

Revielle 7.0 Break pde 7.45 showing great coats clean, Coy parade 9.15 till 12 o'clock arm drill bayonet fighting gas drill. Doctors inspection in the afternoon, went out at night to the YMCA, couldn't get in the pantomime Goldsmith and Starbuck went to Div cinema Irish Guards band played.

Thursday 24th

Break pde showing Great coats clean Coy parade at 9.15 arm drill etc Roast for dinner. Pay after dinner mounted prison guard at night with Tapps

Friday 25th

Still on prison guard was relieved by Cpl Bryant about 4pm. Batt moved up at night about 5.30 and relieved our 2nd Batt rode up on light railway did very little 1st night

Saturday 26th

Stood to in Cordite reserve carried on about 6.30 showed rifles Fred Leigh shot his arm with revolver went on fatigues repairing Cordite res until dinner sleep in the afternoon. Went to dump on fatigue at night, worked until 10pm had rum and tea and then sleep

Sunday 27th

Stood to in Cordite res 5.30 had Breakfast 7.30 then rubbed our feet showed rifles at 9.30 fatigues until dinner, sleep in the afternoon. Relieved no 2 platoon in the post where Adolph was supposed to have captured 2 men stayed there all night. Capt caught me napping out of the trench on trench duty. Had a little gas shells on the right

Monday 28th

Stood to in the post about 5.45. I stayed along with Lewis Gun team remainder went back to the old line after stand to, a very quiet day for us nice and sunny. Stood to at 5.30 was relieved by no 4 platoon after stand to and we went back to the old reserve trench joined the plat. Fetched firewood for the cooks plat Sand bagging. Fritz[Germans] made a raid on 1st Battalion.

Tuesday 29th

Stood to at 5.30 had breakfast slept until dinner went on fatigues at red house dump removing bombs along the railway crossing at Fampoys [Fampoux] cemetery Took wine back to Coy, and I then after tea took it to 1st Batt HQ had a good rum ration and cocoa and then got down to it

Wednesday 30th

Stood to 6 o'clock showed feet 8 o'clock rifles ammo and clean at 8.45 wrote a few letters dinner 12.30

Slept in the afternoon went into the new post off Cordite French had a good straffing then had cocoa after deepening the trench all night

Thursday 31st

Arrived at old trench after stand to had the usual break then slept all day mounted Gas Guard at night and a nice quiet night plat went to F post Shipman under arrest

February 1918

Friday 1st

Stood to 5.30 break and inspect at usual time. Sgt Major put me under close arrest for not wearing steel hat. Relieved at 11 Plat No3 coy at night in deep dug out att [?] to caves [?] went on fatigues after tea all night

Saturday 2nd

Came out of the line after Breakfast caught the 11 o'clock launch and reported at details about 1pm cleaned up in the afternoon went to Div cinema at night then had a good nights rest. Came out for bombing course.

Sunday 3rd

Attended Break pde showed coats clean at 9 and 12 o'clock slept in the afternoon stayed in the barracks reading all night

Monday 4th

Had BRC [*British Red Cross?*] then reported at Brig HQ for bombing course did a lot of throwing in the morning then a lecture in the afternoon went to Div cinema at night then had a good nights rest. Irish Guards band played

Tuesday 5th

Still in the Lives [*Levis*] Barracks went on bombing again morning and afternoon. Batt came out of the line at night and No3 plat stayed in Levis barracks remainder of company outside

Wednesday 6th

Went on bombing course at 9am. Came back for dinner went out at 2pm nothing out order had a lecture

Thursday 7th

In Lives Barracks on bombing course

Friday 8th

In Lives Barracks on bombing course. Went to Div football match final.
2nd Scots Guards 5 3rd Cold[*stream*] Gds 0

Saturday 9th

Finished bombing course in Arras was admonished for trench business

Sunday 10th

Went for a bath Grand Place Arras went out at night with Shipman had a look round Arras

Monday 11th

Still in Levis Barracks Arras had C.Os inspec 9 o'clock had a farewell do at Div cinema at night

Tuesday 12th

Parade 9 o'clock for inspection by Brig[*adier*] Lord Seymour Irish Guards Band played us out of Arras 1st and 3rd GG[*Grenadier Guards*] played us part way joined the 31st Division at Ecoivres [*Ecurie Army Camp*]

Wednesday 13th

In camp at Ecoivres, Practice pde for revue on the 14th by army corps commander stayed on at night

Thursday 14th

In camp at Ecoivres was inspected by new army corps commander in the morning payed out in the afternoon

Friday 15th

Still on camp in Ecoivres , bayonet fighting all morning, pde 6pm drill order saw Mac from Consett [?]

Saturday 16th

In camp at Ecoivres firing in the afternoon

Sunday 17th

In camp at Ecoivres Pde 6 & 10am SMO for trenches went up by train, to daylight dump relieved the DLI [*Durham Light Infantry*] about 12 noon, took over at No12 post in Baron trench

Monday 18th

In Baron trench very quiet all day

Tuesday 19th

In Baron trench 3 plat relieved No1 plat on Tommy trench I relieved Cpl Collet at No4 post at night from 8.45 to 10pm Fritz raided at 2 coy. Took 6 prisoners 6 killed 6 of No 2 wounded none missing quiet afterwards.

Wednesday 20th

Went back to Baron trench at stand to slept all day went in to bombing post at night raining hard but had a quiet night otherwise

Thursday 21st

Came back to Baron trench at stand to was relieved by Irish Guards after dinner and went back to Ecoivres camp by train and marching

Friday 22nd

In Ecoivres camp on reserve

Saturday 23rd

In Ecoivres camp on reserve

Sunday 24th

In Ecoivres camp in reserve saw Tom Clements at football match had supper with him at night

Slackey gassed

Monday 25th

Pde 6.30 in Ecoivres camp for the trenches relieved 3rd Coy in the red line done a few fatigues making fire steps

Tuesday 26th

Still in Red Line slept all day at night went up to Valentine trench front line cleaning up

Wednesday 27th

Slept through the day in Red Line went on fatigues at night burying cables a wet unendurable night got wet through finished early next morning

Thursday 28th

Finished fatigues about 1am wet through and caked with mud breakfast 2.30 slept until 12 on fatigue in afternoon by sections cleaning trench up

March 1918**Friday 1st**

Goldsmith's birthday.

Was relieved by KOYLI [*King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry*] about 12 then went down Deckaville railway to Ecoivres saw Hunt Flufer [*HE Flougher, cpl East Lancs Reg.?*] at Daylight dump

Saturday 2nd

Left Ecoivres in the afternoon entrained at Mont St Eloi and detrained at Tinqués and then marched to Guestreville

Sunday 3rd

In billets at Guestreville showed clean in drill order 11am Payed out 2.30

Monday 4th

In billets at Guestreville training until 12

Tuesday 5th

In billets at Guestreville usual parades stopped a nap [?]

Wednesday 6th

In billets at Guestreville. Inspection by Maj Gen Div Commander. Bath in the afternoon

Thursday 7th

In billets at Guestreville training until 12 medical inspection in the afternoon

Friday 8th

In billets at Guestreville training until 12 payed out in the afternoon

Saturday 9th

In billets at Guestreville. Battalion went up to Brown line on fatigues. I stayed behind with footballers and boxing changed billets Clocks put on an hour at 11pm

Sunday 10th

At Guestreville. Brk pde at 7.45 showing rifle BTD [?] at 9 repairing billets afterwards

Monday 11th

In Details [?] at Guestreville pde for drill all morning was up at midnight getting cooker [?] off for going to coy coming back off fatigues

Tuesday 12th

In Guestreville pded 9.30 SMO for detailing billets. Coy came in at 11 o'clock, we stayed in same billet

Wednesday 13th

In billets at Guestreville went down to 2nd coy at Tincques for boxing No3 plat beat No2 at football 4-0 in coy match

Thursday 14th

At Guestreville went down to 2nd coy at Tincques for boxing No4 plat beat No3 at coy football 1-0

Friday 15th

In billets at Guestreville down to No 2 at Tincques for boxing

Saturday 16th

In billets at Guestreville played 3rd Coldstreams in divisional cup replay 2nd round drew 2 each

Sunday 17th

At Guestreville Divisional sports West Yorks won 5 mile race our Batt man nowhere CO Irish Guards came in first

Monday 18th

At Guestreville played Coldstreams in replay of cup we lost 1-0

Tuesday 19th

In billets at Guestreville heard plenty of bombarding up the line

Wednesday 20th

In billets at Guestreville went on pde for 1st time after coming out of the line. Bombardment up the line

Thursday 21st

In billets at Guestreville usual parades plenty of word about German attacks

Friday 22nd

At Guestreville roused up at 3.00am pde SMO 7.20am
Marched to Tincques then put on buses on the St Pol and Arras road. Finished up after riding all day on the right of Arras, went into the line at night took over a position in the army line heavy shelling all night

Saturday 23rd

In the army line Fritz shelling heavy attacked about 9.0 was repulsed

21st Middlesex counter attacked and took about 1 kilometer had heavy casualties. Our own artillery dropping short shelling several Irish Guards. Mr Gilby wounded with a minnis [*slang for a mortar*]

Sunday 24th

In the army line heavy bombardment near Arras about 2.0am believed Guards div raided. Heavy bombardment on the right at stand to and all the morning relieved no2 coy in the front line

Sunday 24th cont [*25th crossed out*]

Still in the army line bombardments all along the line our own shells dropping short relieved No2 coy in the front line at night SOS went up the Middlesex letting Jerry in the line when the Irish Guards went to relieve them

Went on a patrol with 7 men to see if Fritz was making a jumping off place

Monday 25th [*26th crossed out*]

Our 18 pounders opened out at stand to, still dropping odd ones on our lines pretty quiet all day with regards to Fritz

About 4 in the afternoon we saw troops retiring on the right but we stuck it till we received orders to evacuate at 2.30 then we went back about 4 kilometers, and dug in alongside Gds Division.

Tuesday 26th [*27th crossed out*]

Had to evacuate the new position at dawn and went back to details at a village called Blairville then started retiring again and eventually took over a position but where I don't know.

Deepening the trench all night had hot soup up, rested awhile then camouflaged the trench before morning

Wednesday 27th [*28th crossed out*]

In the new position plenty of air activity the Fritz opened out about 11.30 and kept it up all day made two attacks but was repulsed both times. A bitter cold day.

Moved off at night and took over a chalk trench between Irish Gds and Coldstreams deepening all night

Thursday 28th and Friday 29th

In chalk trench front line in front of Alette plenty of enemy walking about in the village rained a lot through the day was relieved by Irish Gds and went in support on right of Alette plenty of blankets and bits strewed about after the retirement

Saturday 30th

In support trench to No2 coy and Coldstream Gds just on right of Alette

Sunday 31st

In a support trench was relieved by the 16L [16th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers] about 10pm and then marched back to billets stayed in Monchy awhile and then went on to Bienville [*Bienvillers*]

April 1918

Monday 1st

Arrived in billets from the trenches about 2am in Bienwillers cleaned up and then marched to Sombrin and stayed there for the night

Tuesday 2nd

Handed our packs in at Sombrin then marched about 3 kilometers and then got on buses and made to Tincques going through Le Gouray [*La Couray*], Etree Wammon [*Estree-Wamin*], Rosiere, Rebreuviete, Rebreuve [*Rebreuve-sur-Canche*], Frevent, Nuncy [*Nuncq-Hautecourt*], St Pol [*Saint Pol*], Roellecourt, Tinquette and Tincques got off the buses and marched to billets at Berthensart [*Bethencourt*]. I mounted Guard at night.

Wednesday 3rd

On Guard all day in Bethensart [*Bethencourt*] dismounted at 5.0 had a look round the village at night was payed out at 6.0 at night a small pay, busy cleaning the trench dirt off at night. Received a letter from home

Thursday 4th

In billets at Bethensart raining all the morning had a small pde at 11.0

Friday 5th

In billets at Bethensart pde in the morning football in the afternoon raining through the day

Saturday 6th

In Billets at Berthensart adjt [*adjutant*] pde Bath in the afternoon rained at night No2 beat No4 at football 3-1 No3 beat No1 coy 1-0

Sunday 7th

In billets at Berthensart. Heard that Fritz had broke through the Portugese at Festubert

Monday 8th

In billets at Bethensart practicing for Generals inspection

Tuesday 9th

Major Generals Inspection at Tincques. Packed up ready to move at 5 o'clock postponed while IO [*Intelligence Officer?*] bobbing [*?*] on an attack. Moved off about 10 to the St Pol [*Saint Pol*] and Arras road stayed there all night on the roadside [*second sentence crossed out*]

Wednesday 10th

Major Generals Inspection at Tincques packed up ready to move at night moved off about 7.30 and stayed by the side of the St Pol and Arras road all night

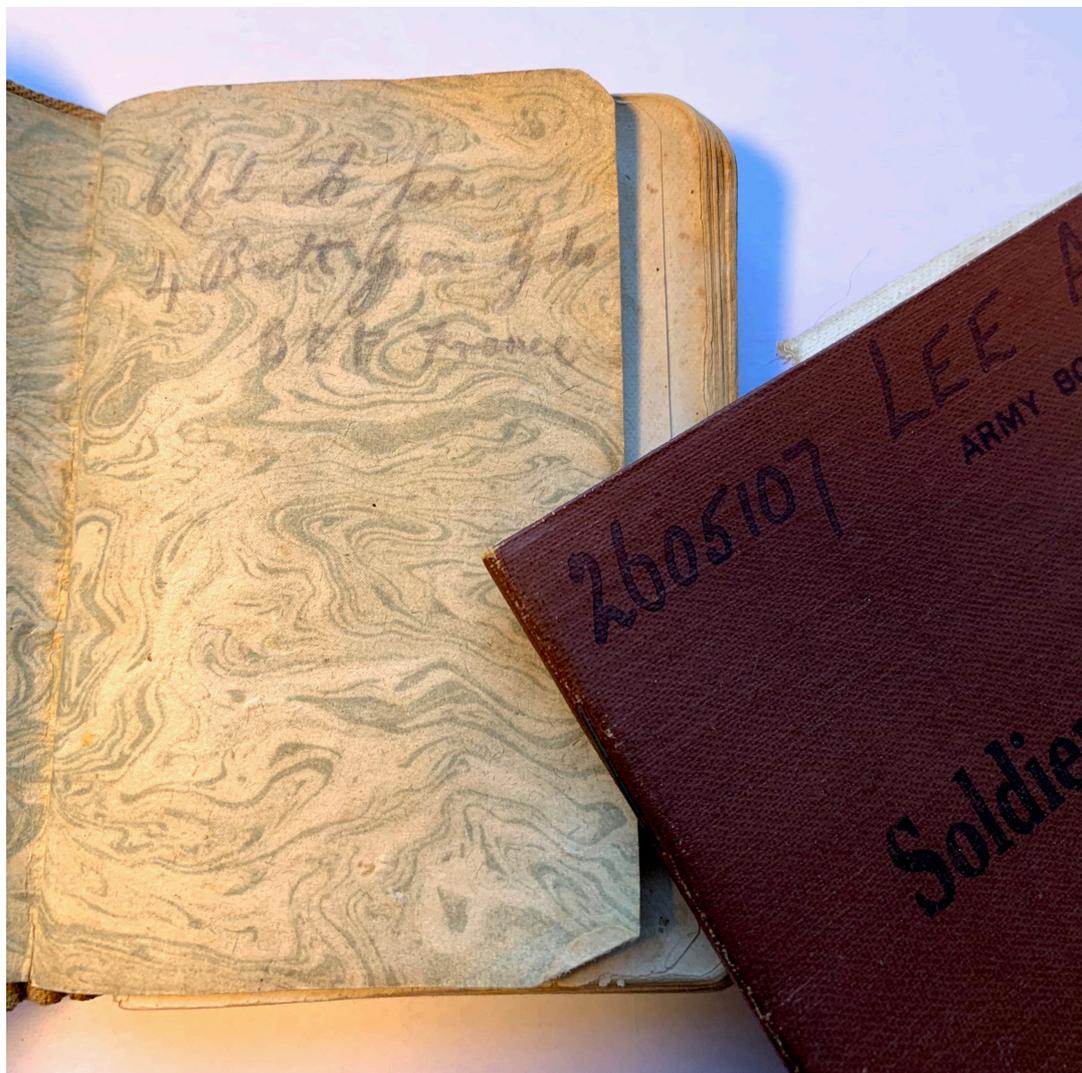
Thursday 11th

By the side of the St Pol and Arras road waiting for buses they came about 1pm road in them to Laventie front going through Villans [*Valhuon*] and Hougebrough [*Hazebrouk*]. stayed in a field until after midnight.

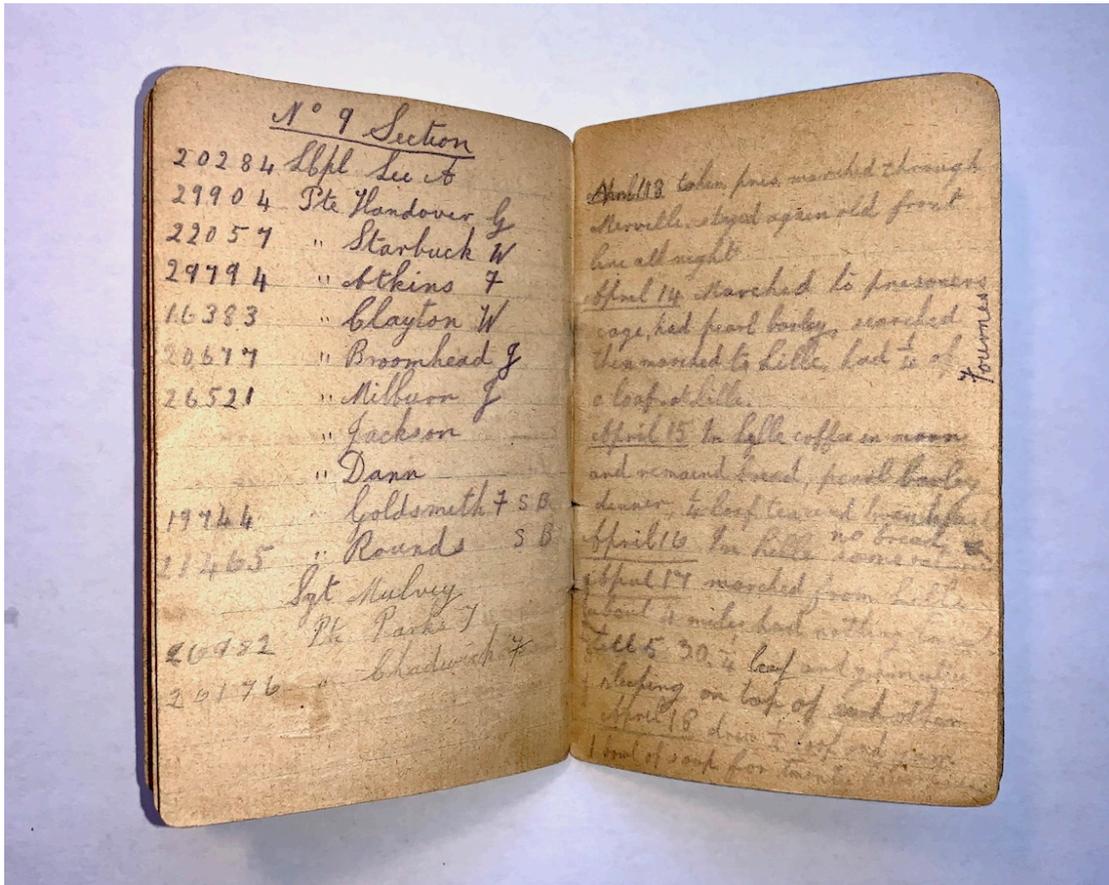
Friday 12th

Moved off from the field about 2.30am and reached the trenches by daylight took over a reserve trench from the Coldstreams. John attacked and Coldstreams had to withdraw through people on their right Coldstreams counter attacked in the afternoon. Jackson and I dug in and had a wet trench.

A lovely sunny day. *[Final War diary entry]*



Diary Transcript: PoW Diary: April to November 1918



Before the blue PoW diary begins there are four pages of notes. These include lists of the names of soldiers from Allan's Section. Allan clearly saw himself as responsible for the men captured with him. Each list of names includes rank and name. It is not clear why he wrote four separate lists. Two lists contain each man's service number. One list indicates the kit each man has (e.g. rifle mittens, wiring gloves), and another finishes with the line "Credit Balance up to April 13th £13 16s 8d".

The notes pages also include information about parcels, the address for the Grenadier Guards and Red Cross care committee and brief descriptions of the routine at Fort Macdonald in Lille and in Dulmen PoW camp.

Transcript of Notes

Page 1

No 9 Section 4th Battalion
Starbuck W rifle mittens
Handover R saw 6 [?] periscope
Burns M wire cutters
Bromhead very pistol
Atkins rifle wire mittens
Cpl Lee wiring gloves

Parcels Grocery
July 18th 115, 116, June 6

Sir R Thynne *[Major General Sir Reginald Thynne]*
Grenadier Guards
Care Committee
c/o Central P of W committee *[Red Cross Central PoW Committee]*
4 Thurloe Place
London SW7

[List of dates and parcel numbers in June, July and August]

Page 2

No 9 Section

No	Name	
20284	LCpl Lee A	
24605	LCpl Parsons C	S
22057	Pte Starbuck W	
19744	Pte Goldsmith F	SB
29904	Pte Handover G	
20591	Pte Hall J	R
19565	Pte Burns M	R
13248	Pte Wakefield T	
29794	Pte Atkins F	
16383	Pte Clayton W	B
20677	Pte Broomhead J	
26521	Pte Milburn J	

Credit balance up to April 13th
£13 16s 8d

Page 3

LCpl A Lee
Pte Starbuck W
Pte Goldsmith F
Pte Handover G
Pte Atkins, Clayton
Pte Milburn
Pte Harris W
Pte Ardbeer L

Fort Macdonald. Fresh air once a day when we drew days rations at 9am, water once a day. Water once in two days train ride. A bowl and spoon per man at Dulmen camp. 25th April 3 blankets per man

Page 4

No 9 Section

20284	LCpl Lee A
29904	Pte Handover G
22057	Pte Starbuck W
29794	Pte Atkins F
16383	Pte Clayton W
20677	Pte Broomhead J
26521	Pte Milburn J
	Pte Jackson
	Pte Dann

19744	Pte Goldsmith F	SB
21465	Pte Rounds	SB
	Sgt Mulvey	
26921	Pte Parks J	
26176	Pte Chadwick F	

April 1918

Saturday 13th

Taken pris[oner] marched through Merville stayed again old front line all night

Sunday 14th

Marched to prisoners cage, had pearl barley, searched then marched to Lille, had $\frac{1}{4}$ of loaf at Lille. Fournes *[in margin – probably Fournes-en-Weppe between Merville and Lille. Between 14th and 18th Allan is likely to have been in Fournes, not Lille, hence his marginalia.]*

Monday 15th

In Lille coffee in morn[ing] and remaind[er] bread, pearl barley dinner, $\frac{1}{4}$ loaf tea and breakfast

Tuesday 16th

In Lille. No bread some rations

Wednesday 17th

Marched from Lille about 4 miles had nothing to eat till 5.30 $\frac{1}{4}$ loaf and jam coffee sleeping on top of each other

Thursday 18th

Drew $\frac{1}{4}$ loaf and jam 1 bowl of soup for twenty four hours

Friday 19th

Fort MacDonald

In the fort outside Lille latrines at the door. Some rations at 10.0am.

Saturday 20th

In fort outside Lille. Some rations at 9.0am

Sunday 21st

Left the fort 5am entrained Lille station 9am had a limping journey with nothing to eat all day making 24[?] hours since last issue, men selling boots, jerseys, puttees, watches for bread. French civilians very good to us.

Monday 22nd

Arrived Essen *[? crossed out]* 1am had soup 1st meal of the journey. *[rest of entry very faded]*

Tuesday 23rd

Arrived at Haltern 8am had soup and then marched to a camp had soup for dinner and soup water for supper

Dulmen *[in margin]*

Wednesday 24th

In camp one slice of bread day, and a bowl of coffee breakfast, was searched, soup dinner, bath at night lost my boots at the bath clean clothes others fumigated boiled changed quarters to Group 3 potatoes and mussels for supper 11pm

Thursday 25th

In different huts, good beds and 3 blankets per man 2 slices and coffee for breakfast. 2 slices of bread and 2 bowls of soup regular rations medical inspection was issued with Dutch clogs

Friday 26th

Innoculated and vaccinated in the morning 2 parcels between 2 afterwards from red cross.

Saturday 27th

Received another loaf of bread parcel usual rations. Roll call 7.20 – 8.20.

Sunday 28th

Sunday church service in our hut usual rations, wrote a letter and a card home. Card to Beaty.

Monday 29th

In the same compound

Tuesday 30th

Same again. Same rations

May 1918**Wednesday 1st**

Innoculated right breast finished last of parcels

Thursday 2nd

Back again to old rations. 2 slices of dry bread soup dinner soup tea. Took details of personal appearance

Friday 3rd

Usual rations strong rumours of another parcel eat break bread on strength of it

Saturday 4th

Had no breakfast. Inoculated in the morning. Received another emergency parcel containing 2 tins cheese, 1 tin milk, 1 tin beef, 1 tin mutton, 1 tin dripping, 1 tin cocoa, 1 pkt tea, 4 pkts biscuits

Sunday 5th

Sunday roll call 3 times 8.30, 11.30. 4.30 term [?] issue card to North Skelton

Monday 6th

A party was warned to move off to No2 Group's hut

Tuesday 7th

We drew a loaf of bread in the morning had a bath at 10.30 party [?] warned repeat [?] move off

Wednesday 8th

Took particulars with regards to mining

Thursday 9th

Strong rumours that Lille had fallen Ascension day 3 roll calls

Friday 10th

Issued with a loaf a man

Saturday 11th

Changed compounds usual routine

Sunday 12th

Sunday as usual 3 roll calls letter home card to Nellie eat my German bread

Monday 13th

No break[fast] a good dinner issued with half a loaf

Tuesday 14th

Issued with biscuits 1 box between 3 average 7 per man. Changed over to No1 Group for [?] a little, letter, same rations. Concert at night very good.

Wednesday 15th

Group 1 barrack warden fatigues parties went out

Thursday 16th

Usual routine

Friday 17th

Usual routine

Saturday 18th

Had a bath

Sunday 19th

Sunday no fatigues PC [postcard?] to Emily

Monday 20th

Whit Monday a gen[eral] holiday no fatigues

Tuesday 21st

Rumours of parcels

Wednesday 22nd

Red cross emergency parcel

Thursday 23rd

As usual

Friday 24th

Left camp 6.30am entrained at Holtern [?] 9.40am arrived at 6pm. Marched 4K to camp had sour soup

Saturday 25th

Tidying room up. Had a good supper

Sunday 26th

Went to pictures [?] and warned for morning shift calling. Soup 3 times a day

Monday 27th

Reveille soup at 3.30, left [?] for pit 4.30am down at 6. Gobbing [*dealing with the mine waste*] all day. Out at 2pm.

Tuesday 28th

Gobbing again mussels for tea [?]

Wednesday 29th

Filling coal Englishman killed last night

Thursday 30th

Usual work

Friday 31st

Usual

June 1918**Saturday 1st**

Letter home

Sunday 2nd

Sunday. Man's funeral, card to Danny very good funeral killed in the mine

Monday 3rd

Easy day coaling

4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, June

Usual double shifts on 8th

Sunday 9th

Sunday card home

10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th June

Was paid 11 Marks

Saturday 15th

Sat drew box of biscuits sea [?]

Sunday 16th

Shift off letter to Beatty and to Nellie

17th, 18th, June

Had biscuits stolen

19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd June

Sun[*day*] usual double shift

24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th June

Drew 3 parcels of biscuits

Sunday 30th

Sunday letter home

July 1918

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th July

Double shift

Sunday 7th

Sunday parcels that [?] back through boys own families

Monday 8th

Mon[*day*] issued with shoes and grocery parcels

Tuesday 9th

Received another B[*iscuit*] parcel

10th, 11th, 12th, 13th

As usual

Sunday 14th

Sunday letter

15th, 16th, 17th July

Payed out

[From July to October the same routine is in place with very short entries as above in the diary. The routine is mine working with letter writing on Sunday. Each parcel arrival is noted and mail from home begins to be received.]

October 1918

Monday 28th

The same routine up to Oct 28th and I got ease [?] arbiter [*possibly Arbeit – German for work, or possibly a medical treatment for his leg*] with poisoned leg

November 1918

Saturday 9th [*First entry after 28th October*]

Jerries struck at the mine doctor gave me arbite [*possibly Arbeit or possibly a treatment*]

Letters from Beaty blond [?] home

Sunday 10th

Card to Elma

Monday 11th

Revolutions in Germany no work at the mines

12th, 13th, 14th November

Work

Friday 15th

Prisoners refused to work

16th, 17th, 18th November

No work

Tuesday 19th

Trained in coal trucks to Rheincamp [?], then trained to Fredericksfeld [*Friedrichsfeld PoW camp*]. Was issued with heaps of food and cigs

Wednesday 20th

Marched with all kit to Wesel. Trained to Emmerich then to Elton border town then entrained to Zevenaar and to great relief was taken over by the Dutch. Slept in a school at Zevenaar was treated very kindly by the Dutch.

Thursday 21st

Entrained at Zevenaar 12noon arrived at Rotterdam about 5pm and stayed in dock shed all night after being issued with another packet

Friday 22nd

Issued with khaki, still in the shed, Jones and I went out at night met a sailor and had a good night in Rotterdam

Saturday 23rd

Still in dock shed split up into companies

Sunday 24th

In the dock sheds

Monday 25th

Mon[day] got on board the Hunts Green about 1pm issued with a parcel KFG spoon [?]

Tuesday 26th

Tuesday on board Monday night sailed to Hook of Holland in the afternoon and anchored for the night

Wednesday 27th

Sailed across anchored off the Humber

Thursday 28th

Thursday arrived in Hull a splendid reception trained to Ripon

Friday 29th

Medical inspection morning and afternoon drew £2.10s [*Final PoW diary entry*]