



DAIRY OF
SJT.WILLIAM FREDERICK OSBORNE
12671 4th.Battalion Royal Fusiliers (The City of London Regiment)



13th.August 1914 – 17th.November 1914

Transcribed and Annotated by J. P. Kelleher 2007

DIARY OF
12671 SGT. WILLIAM FREDERICK OSBORNE

4th. Battalion Royal Fusiliers (The City of London Regiment)

Served 1907 – 1922

Mentioned In Despatches 8.10.1914

Returned to U.K. October 1914 suffering wounds

Commissioned 2nd.Lieut. 8th Bn Royal Fusiliers 15.12.1917

Temp Captain whilst Adjutant 18.8.1918

Lieut 3rd.Bn. Royal Fusiliers 15.6.1919 - 1922

&

WOII Royal Air Force (No.357522) 1924 – 1946

Died 1948

War v Germany

War Declared 4-8-14

13-8-14 Left Newport for Cowes – had a long halt in Cowes treated well by inhabitants, good send off. Arrived S'hampton about 12.30 after unloading boat embarked at once on SS Martaban 6-15, after uneventful voyage arrived at Havre France 13-8-14. No beer, no blankets, [no]tea to eat. Huddled on board SS like sardines.

14-8-14 Rev[eille] 3.am after a fitful nights sleep. Took on board French pilot shortly afterwards who piloted SS into Havre Harbour, splendid, got fine reception especially from French troops, our own sang Marsellaise many times.

Disembarked about 6.00am without incident and waited in big store shed until disembarkation was complete . Fell in marched to No 8 Rest Camp about 9 miles, what a march. RF[Royal Fusiliers] leading RSF[Royal Scots Fusiliers] in rear, about 40 fell out chiefly reservists who are getting out of hand already. Come to conclusion Begley, damn fool, Wallace very bad, marched well myself feel very tired. People of P..... very glad to see us, splendid ovation from them. Rifle and feet inspection, lights out 9.45.

During evening French ladies brought many flowers to camp and distributed them to officers and others. Terrible thunder storm during night, horses broke loose, troops who were in the open wet through, under cover myself.

15-8-14 Rev. 5.am Breakfast 6am Pitched camp in rain after breakfast, moved into same, raining all day, everything wet through . Troops singing all day. Heard rumours of English troops doing good work in firing line especially 1st.Battn (unconfirmed) [1st.Bn.RF did not arrive in France until 9th.September 1914] Done nothing all day, played bridge tonight & last. Part of the 9th.Bde moved to destination unknown after tea. Expect to move ourselves in morning . Got really bitten by mosquitoes – right H & L arm swollen badly. Troops very lively, especially *Musgrove* [10149 Pte. G.H.] Many French visitors in camp especially ladies. Heard Japan v Germany at war. Bad nights rest, rained nearly all night, had straw in tents.

16-8-14 Sunday Reveille 6.am Breakfast 7.am (no milk in tea) still raining. Paraded at 9.am & marched back to Havre after waiting there until 3.30 entrained and started our journey towards Belgium frontier in cattle trucks with one little lamp – 30 in a truck- most awful journey. Stopped at every big station and received a fine ovation from the inhabitants who gave us tobacco, flowers, fruit etc. Stopped at Rouen at 8.0.am & had coffee, very bad stuff

17-8-14 Monday Entrained again about 8.30 (am)very bad nights rest, arrived at LANDRECIES about 8.30 am , troops very tired and worn out after journey. Marched from Landrecies to NOYELLES (6 miles) & billeted in Barracks etc, rotten place can buy nothing scarcely. Had several inspections during the day and managed to get some beer. Few people here who are very generous. Theirs getting more like bullies every hour . Had nothing to eat but bully and biscuits during the last 48 hours. Went to bed about 10.0pm

18-8-14 Tuesday Had good nights sleep, next reveille 5.45 breakfast 7.0am, Bread, bacon, tea (no milk) Parade at 8.am did drill in field at nearby at 9.am. RFC motor transport went by. Paraded for Route march at 11.am whilst on parade ASC [Army Service Corps] motor transport passed us, only went about 2½ miles out, Had s....in the afternoon. Several aeroplanes passed over towards Belgian frontier this afternoon. Having inspection after tea.

NB Rumoured staying here till Thursday. Strange to say no war news available. Nothing happened during evening. Noyelles sold out Tobac[co] & matches. Strolled about village all night, bed about 10pm.

19-8-14 Wednesday Same programme as yesterday except held route march 9.am about 6 miles, very hot. Had several inspections after parade. Trying troops to learn French rather a failure.

Village sold out. Bed about 9.30pm, very cold at night.

20-8-14 Thursday Rev 5.25am Breakfast 7.am March to Taismeres about 2½ miles, very hot marching. Dinner : Boiled meat & bread, Tea: Jam & Bread . Bde Route March 2.30pm about 7 miles very hot. Returned to billet in barn about 5.30pm. No inspection. Paying out, but too late, had s..... on Rumoured that 2500 French are Hors de Combat got caught in Lens [?]

also that we have 90 mls to march during next 7 days. Battn. In state of constant readiness, expect to move at 5 mins notice, awful suspense, hear we shall be in action probably tomorrow, everything pretty quiet. Two letters from home, one dated 12-8-14 other 14-8-14, expected one from Emmie, but no success. Settled down to sleep 9.30pm fully dressed. Satt....rather widely distributed, very inconvenient. Detail given out now – Rev 3.3.0 Breakfast 4.am unless alarm goes.

21-8-14 Friday Marched from TAISMERES to LA LONGUEVILLE about 12 mls. Good march, billeted in school plenty of news re Germans, but saw none. Stayed the night billeted in school, nothing of importance happened.

22-8-14 Saturday Left La Longueville at 5.am marched to NIMY North of MONS about 16 mls. X Coy do Guard. Road all the way paved with cobbles, made march very hard. Passed over battlefield of MALPLAQUET. People very enthusiastic. Reached Mons, everywhere en fete at Anglaise soldiers. Hear German rear have killed 10 horses. We captured 5 Germans & killed 10 (MX) [4/Middx. Regt.] Went on outpost duty with No.6 Platoon, lots of firing & flashes in woods, but saw nothing. Relieved by [4th] MX about 3pm. Inhabitants gave us dinner, tobacco, drink, almost anything they had. Returned to NIMY station for night billet. Paraded High St NIMY with railway sleepers in case Capt. Ashburner now on outpost is forced to retire. In the evening visited several houses for the purpose of raising a barricade if necessary with Lt Beazley. German aeroplane flew over about 6pm fired on by many troops but got away. Filled up for beer – no rations issued – brought our own but did not have them issued. Good nights rest till 5am



4th.Battalion Royal Fusiliers – Mons – 23rd.August 1914

23-8-14 Sunday No letters. Much looked forward to . Got our own breakfast where we could. Inhabitants very good still gave us anything they had. Orders to move at 15 mins notice.

23-8-14 NIMY – Orders to move at 15 mins notice. One Belgian civilian shot through foot by German stray bullet.

Artillery fire started all round – thought our own but soon found mistaken – no casualties up to now. Middle of morning & German officer brought in wounded & action apparently commenced. All platoons out to reinforce outpost except No.6 Platoon. Hearing that hundreds of Germans being killed. Wounded being brought rapidly up to the dressing station but no definite news yet. Ordered to retire all platoons – No.6 to hold on to last moment. All returned except ourselves. Saw hordes of Germans & opened fire. Several Germans from line on right dressed in khaki overcoats didn't recognise them so held fire – but soon recognised mistake, shortage of men, wonder when we are going to retire. Ordered to retire and did so under murderous fire through MX lines, holding barriers. Got back but lost two men (L M.....).

Retired about 4 miles &on private ground

8 Killed – 13 Wounded – 16 Missing – Outpost Coy. Heavily pressed up to 6.30pm 23-8-14

German Advance

NIMY

Barriers



Railway

Lines of

retirement

To Mons

24-8-14 Monday Got up at 2am very cold did night march to position SW of MONS. Soon got into action & took up another position. Preparatory bar[ricades] Got action very exiting times. Not many casualties on R Fus. No rations issued. Chief demand – water-. Long march back until after 10pm when we arrived in cornfield & slept amongst corn cut at BERMERIES. Marching very hard also return tired out. N.F. [Northumberland Fusiliers] many casualties also MX and Scots Fusiliers. Very pitiful to see inhabitants leaving their homes. Heard that we get 48 hr rest also that French Army is near.

25-8-14 Tuesday Paraded. off at 5.am & marched about 20 miles [four lines in diary crossed through] No casualties, reached INCHY about 5pm & billeted . Heard German army 4 miles off also that French army has joined us up. Two Companies on outpost, one to fresh billets & slept in equipment , wet through we got caught in thunder storm about 4pm.

26-8-14 Wednesday Opened fire upon on German aeroplane & brought it down, both airmen killed. Got on move out at 6am & releived outpost line, withdrawn soon afterwards & entrenched & position N of INCHY, Battn to go into action, shells bursting all around, artillery duel going on, many casualties already through shrapnel. Hell broke loose, at least it seems like it, feet very bad myself & very tired (time 10.20pm) under heavy artillery fire, one shell lands amongst RF and did much damage – others passed harmlessly over trenches. Reports arrive that French are on our Right (20,000) also that they have captured CAMBRAI . Germans losing heartily & retiring. RF's in reserve. Hear that Cheshires are wiped out excpet 1 officer & 2 men, also RSF + NF suffered heavily. Dinner of mutton in firing line. Lull in firing about midday, think we are retiring early. About 3pm ordered to retire at once. All German artillery concentrated on us. Retirement fairly orderly under circumstances. RF's as usual in rear doing all return action. Marched in heavy rain till 12 MidNight had 1½ hours halt & moved on again, general line of retirement south.

27-8-14 Thursday Had halted at 10am many fell out on march, very wet & bad for marching. Halt till 1pm out. No rations issued except 2 biscuits & jam and bacon per man. Hear Germans are very near at 11.30 and move out again - fight retiring action (3.40)

Notes: Still retiring with N.Fusrs : Gen.....directing operations. Rain has eased but very dull. Inhabitants still leaving their homes very pitiful. Right foot very bad – had boots on since 22nd. Got into billet in field about 6pm & rested until 12 Mid Night. Awful time of it – men sticking it well, marched miles with nothing to eat

CRISOLLES 28-8-14 Friday Moved off 12 MN marched all night & all next day with exception of entrenching : one operation for rearguard. B Coy as usual there at HAM . Most awful time.

Dinner consisted of 4and bone eaten marching through HAM. Marched all afternoon still going South. Saw no Germans all but hear they are near. Billeted about 7pm Had supper – boiled chicken etc between three also breakfast. Officers say we have broken record for marching. Messaged received from Secretary of State for War congratulating us.

Had good nights rest.

Note: Passed French Cavalry in afternoon. Hear that our 2nd Line transport is captured including all senr staff. No food practically for three days. Our Cav[alry] did good work.

Did little fighting last three days but were always ready. R Fus always rear guard. Many men fell out on march & brought in by motor & own feet very bad. Roll on England.

29-8-14 Saturday Reveille 6am Good breakfast at cottage (eggs etc) Order given to remain here all day. Late order to move at 2hr notice. French in action about 6mls North. Hear gun fire quite plainly.

11am Orders to get ready to move at moments notice. Fell in & started retiring South – 4th Bn formed rear guard & still till nearly dark. At CROSELLES. German Uhlans number 200x. Opened fire on 5 but only saw one empty saddle. Retired under cover of darkness. Passed through Lincoln's & R.I.R. barricading roads and blocking roadways etc. Marched till 2.30pm Sunday.

30-8-14 – Sunday – and rested in a field for one hour. Moved on to town of CUTZ had tea only in street, moved off again, very hot, marched till 10.0am. Heard bridges blown up in Raer over Seine. Halted till 3pm & moved on again until billets were reached. 1st march about 170 miles during past week. Place named? (Got a letter from E.)

31-8-14 Monday Reveille at 5.am breakfast 5.45 moved off at 7.am – Retired South. Several messages read from General Smith-Dorrien & French & fleet. Very hot all day/ no water. 11pm. Marched off again at 10pm. Still going south. Had splendid reception going through towns. Reached VANCHELIERS & billeted in sugar factory. Got.....all mens quarters and beds alright. Very trying march hot & dusty roads. Letter from Emmie & Mam dated 18-8-14. Heard that the Guards bayoneted the Germans at LANDRECIES during the night . Troops at present cooking their own dinner as fresh meat was issued this morning. Many men fell out on march. German aeroplane flew over this morning, but did not fire at it as it was out of range. Here we rested on side of road

1-9-14 Tuesday Reveille at 3am breakfast 4.0.am waited till 6.am before moving off. During time waiting had messages read of 12th Lancers victory, two French victories, and Naval victory.

Hear that German Cavalry are near so take up observation line & wait till about 12 noon then march off, still retiring & see nothing of enemy. Stopped in village in open all night got there about 7pm. After very trying march, ordered to sleep with arms & equipment handy and ready to move between 12 & 1am.

2-9-14 Wednesday Didn't move till 4.30am. Did long & trying march in heat till 11.30pm at present having one hours rest for dinner. Moved on after dinner & billeted the night at PENCHARD. ½ X Coy on outpost (No 7 + 8 Platoons.

3-9-14 Thursday Rev.4.45 Moved off at 6.35. Had long halts during the first two hours out. Lt Harter (later Maj Gen Sir James Harter DSO, Colonel of RF) that we are shortly to take up position to give battle . Marched on through towns of MEAUX & NANTIELLES. All bridges at MEAUX blown up after we have passed them. After much delay got into billet (barn) about 4.30pm. One section my platoon on outpost. Passed by enormous orchard, apples, peaches and pears. Had good nights rest. Hear that we are entrenching all day tomorrow to give decisive battle to enemy. Heard no big gun firing today for the first time since 22nd August. German aeroplane flew over about 6pm was opened

fire on by troops but failed to bring it down probably out of range. Hear that artillery brought it down, but didn't hear it go off.

4-9-14 Friday Rev 5am – Sick – 6.am (No rations issued) Ordered to stand by until orders are given to march off (now 7.15am) Moved at 2.30pm but only about 1 mile then stayed there until about 10.30pm.

5-9-14 Saturday Marched off in Northerly direction till 7.30am arrived at billet, very bad road. 1st line of reinforcements arrived and posted to C Coy (except Sgt Lawman) [8523 Sgt, later CSM Jasper Lawman : MC 1918 LSGC 1922 Served 4RF Iraq]. German aeroplane passed over about 7pm on 4th Sept. fired at it but did not bring it down. Another passed over this Saturday (today) morning but did not fire at it. Good billet, purchased plenty of food. No bread issued. Rest all day.

6-9-14 Sunday Reveille at 4.45 Breakfast 5.15 Moved off 6.30am (Biscuits & Bully issued) M marched about 2 miles & halted at side of road waiting till we are wanted. Hear heavy firing on ones right. Ourselves advance again NE direction. 2nd Div on right, 5th Div on left 4RF advance guard to right column of 3rd Division. Capt. Carey bullying platoon commanders again. Several French inhabitants stopped trying to pass us on road, put under escort (time 1pm) waited till 2.30pm & moved off in direction of NW LUMIGNY. Hear that 1st Army Corps engaged with enemy & that enemy are retiring, ordered to proceed to LUMIGNY & if possible cut off enemy. My platoon advance points. Arrived there but saw nothing of enemy & waited about until dark & then billeted in barn at LUMIGNY for night.

During day, one woman and child shot by Germans believed to be a mistake whilst firing at some stragglers of ones own. 12 Lancers did good work. Germans have retired. Great difficulty in getting water as we are afraid it is poisoned by Germans.

7-9-14 Monday Rev.5am. breakfast 6.am Bully & biscuits & (tea & sugar innovation) issued only. Heard firing , time 3.am, this morning. Did ½hrs skirmishing & fire & movement within full view of the enemy under Capt Le M Carey. 9.30 standing by waiting for orders. Moved off about 2pm going through several villages looted by the Germans. About 100 reinforcements joined up. Got into a field about 7.20pm & stayed the night. Rum issued, had a good sleep.

8-9-14 – Tuesday ORLY Moved about 5.am hadn't gone far before we were on enemy's track and opened fire on them as he was crossing a road on our front. Germans defending a river. N.F. & RSF many casualties. RF in reserve but did not do anything. Germans offered a lot of resistance & were severely handled by our artillery. Enemy retired about 6pm leaving us in possession of their position. All towns looted by Germans. Got into an orchard about 8.0pm & stayed the night. Captured about 40 German prisoners.

9-9-14 Wednesday Reveille at 3am Moved to alarm post 3.30am Had breakfast, bacon & bully, jam, cheese, Oxo, biscuits, bread, tea issued. Moved off at 5.am passing through ORLY which had been looted by the enemy. Lovely place lying in a valley with river running through it. Germans must have retired in a hurry as they forgot to blow up the main bridge before retiring, but shelled it as soon as we crossed it this morning. Under shell fire (now 3.20pm) as the Germans are offering a lot of resistance . Many of our Bgde wounded but none of the RF's yet. as we have not been under fire up to now. Had loaf of German black bread from motor car left by the Germans, jolly good after having so many biscuits. Battle still raging. Hear that 5th Div. are just coming up on our left . Have been waiting for them all day (3.45pm) Stayed & did outpost duty all night. Blocked tracks etc. Heard firing about 2am. State of readiness all night, no sleep.

10-9-14 Thursday Moved off at 5am Rations issued at road side, but had to leave some as we had no time to pack, they started the advance with 4/RF as advance guard. D Coy lead of main guard. After marching N. about 3 miles came in contact with enemy. 4/RF rushed forward with all speed, C Coy & ½ B took up position on ridge & saw enemy's convoy moving away from us also enemy's rear guard about 700 yards distant. Opened rapid fire & column in & enemy fled to village rear in great disorder. Lt Beazley & my platoon ordered to advance on left & take up position nearer

enemy's position near a wood. We advanced and took up position, came under very heavy fire. Lt Beazley shot from rear, also Ruby [*L-8892 Alfred James*] killed also Cpl. Morratt [*L/11467 Charles.*] & 5 others wounded. Ordered to retire. Retired under my orders, retired and formed up in line with C Coy. & opened fire again on the enemy. Just after this Lt Tower shot very near the heart & message arrived from Beazley explaining retirement to Capt Ashburner. Latter had many casualties. Especially C Coy. Enemy entered from village of CRECY in great disorder. Saw just afterwards enemy showing a white flag about 100 flags in all. So formed up & advanced through village. Had good victory & captured about 1500 prisoners & many wounded enemy, left trenches full of dead behind. Marched about 3 miles to small village & billeted. Battn ordered about helping wounded to rear.

11-9-14 Friday Moved about 7am & marched until 2pm nothing exciting happened, marched into an orchard & bivouacked. Started to rain & kept on, very miserable – lit big fires & got lots of straw to try and keep dry & warm. Rain stopped about 7pm, had a fine night.

12-9-14 Saturday Moved at 6am – no rations issued except tae & sugar. Did a long march towards BRAINE heard heavy firing the whole time on Right & left. Had a long halt near BRAINE. Hear that enemy are very near. Advanced through BRAINE. Passed over river with about 200 shells in it of enemy. Saw walls etc fortified by Germans. Passed dead officer & hear that he is Lt. Trench, caught and shot by the Germans. Many wounded passed, also German prisoners. 4/RF advanced through wood in two lines but saw nothing of enemy who apparently had run away. On forming up Pte Freeman shot through wrist by stray bullet. Still heavy firing in distance. Noticed absence of enemy big gun fire during the last few days. Heavy rain all day, roads very bad. Marched to small village & billeted in barn during the night. No rations issued yet so stewed up bully and potatoes.

13-9-14 Sunday On parade at 4.30 & fell out to stand by. Hearing firing going on on right and left. Ordered to move at 8.am (time now 7am) Moved towards SOISSONS & took cover from a very heavy gun fire till 6pm. Moved on again & found bridge had been built probably by R.E., crossed over and did night march towards some light ground VALLET, took up pos. and fortified it (barn & outbuildings – my platoon) Several shots fired during night (no rations).

14-9-14 Monday Germans attacked with vigour at daybreak & did enormous damage with shell fire. RF's in thick of it. Forced to retire about 10.am Myself sent to catch R Flank & opened fire on by 2 M Guns of enemy. Retired a few hundred yards to better cover & stayed there until dusk. Had awful time all day, many casualties including L-Cpl Lett [*L-15162 William John*]. Enemy's shell fire and MG very deadly, no artillery support for ourselves until late in the day. Hear that R.E. cannot bridge the river, fire too heavy.

Moved about 7pm to advance in to barn previously held during morning & fortified it with loop hole barricades etc. Saw Germans in distance by light of big barn very near which is on fire. Sent with one man by N R McMahon (*Brig-Gen Norman Reginald McMahon DSO Killed In Action 11.11.14*) & captured 2 prisoners with wounded N.Fus. Took patrol of 2 men into the back yard and came across 6 Germans getting water, called upon them to surrender but they resisted. Made a stab at one with bayonet but it slipped & he got away wounded but yelling. Shot one in doorway, one against wall, one in the leg, one against the door. Killed three and wounded one which was afterwards brought behind the barricades & bandaged up with ½ my 1st aid bandage. Slightly wounded myself in left side but able to carry on . About 12 Midnight the Germans attacked and bombarded us with M Gun and rifle fire. Sent to C.O. for reinforcements just in time & remainder of Coy came up just as attack started. Most terrible time, could give no orders as the noise was so great. The Germans were repulsed after about 1 hour by the remainder of the Battalion. Rifle fire going on all night, we returned about 4.30am next morning to entrenched position.

B Company 3 Killed 24 Wounded 2 Missing

A Company lost 97

15-9-14 Tuesday Had rations and rum issued (full issue) & took cover on side of wood (8.am) Artillery duel going on. Terrific cannonade. Moved units position at 2pm & entrenched, hear a lot of rifle fire. My platoon on its own to try & stop flank attack,- entrenched and had bully beef and bread

to eat. Firing started about 12MN but saw no enemy – very thick mist, lasted about an hour –awful noise. Don't know how many casualties – they sound very awful. Rained all night long so got wet through.

16-9-14 Wednesday Still raining – rations issued – artillery firing near that village in rear of us, is in ruins not a single house standing. Rain stopped about 8am, so got to work & improved position. A lot of sniping going on, chiefly on our side. R.I.Reg using MG freely – saw nothing of enemy except that they are entrenching about 800 yds away. French had big success yesterday. Position of armies in here, French, ourselves, 1st Army Corps, French. Had rather a busy day but no firing thank goodness. Enemy artillery very demoralizing, about 10 yds in front of our position is the grave of L/Cpl. Collins [*L-10249 Albert KIA 15.9.14 - Blue on Blue*] killed by one of our own shells. Expect decisive battle at any time (time 5.30pm) Feeling very tired had no proper rest the last 3 days. Nothing really happened after this. A lot of shooting took place during the night but saw no enemy. German Siege Gun (60lb) on the go all night. – no proper rest again, feeling more tired than ever.

17-9-14 Thursday Party of men left to draw rations at 7pm. Returned at 4.am. Had full issue of rations. Artillery duel still going on, our own artillery appears to have moved further round. Heard nothing of the 6th.Div [including 1/R.F disembarked 9.9.14] up to now. No fresh development in battle far as I know (9am) Spent remainder of day improving trenches, many alarms. German heavy gun busy all day. Stood under arms all night.

18-9-14 Friday Morning broke fine, very cold but dry. German gun ceased fire during night. Part sent for rations last night returned this morning. Rum. Tobacco etc (Rec. E.Players) Spent day improving trenches. Pte. Watts killed by shell. [*L-15129 Arthur James*] Enemy and ourselves doing a lot of artillery fire. Major Mallock considers there is a big battle raging. Sniping going on all day. Many alarms, hear that R.M.A. [*Royal Marine Artillery*]. My wound much better, though still uncomfortable (4.30pm stand by under arms) No attack followed but a lot of sniping was carried on both sides. Murderous artillery fire of enemy still raging. Still in trenches, very cold, wet, and no rations.

19-9-14 Saturday Morning broke fine & cold. Position appeared the same, many false alarms during the day. Pte Kenton[13572] shot in hand, C-Sjt Jarvis [15066] shot in arm. Much firing heard, expect Germans to attack at any time. Attack commenced about 6pm by enemy, very wild attack, appeared to be no control of Germans, bugles sounding what seemed like the charge, but enemy did not respond. Managed to beat the enemy off after about one hours hard fighting. Another attack about 10pm. But was beaten off. Stood at arms all night.

20-9-14 Sunday Germans big gun fired 4 rounds at 2.45am as signal apparently for advance to start attack which started at dawn. Germans advanced in their thousands but we had the superior position. German guns dangerously near our line but did no damage. Had about 3 hours hard fighting and managed to beat them off. Counted 35 dead Germans on sky line afterwards. Germans retired to farm nearby. Fresh firing going on afterwards. Saw enemy entrenching gun about 1000 yards away, all of them walking about & getting picked off by our fellows.captured one German prisoner. Attack caused much excitement, our people very cool under fire as the German guns did no damage, very few casualties considering the number who attacked us. Germans have no heart to attack. Very quiet all day. C.O. sent message round congratulating troops on splendid work, also message from Hamilton and Shaw. After being in trenches for 8 days & 7 nights we are relieved by the Lincolnshire Regt. We slept in Lincoln's trenches well behind the firing line. Arms at 1pm to move further back.

21-9-14 Monday Marched to COURCELLES & billeted in private house. Had plenty of food, but feel knocked up. Had first wash & shave in 8 days (time 3pm) More reinforcements joined yesterday.

NOTE Marched through AISNE & found town in ruins, caused by enemy shell fire, also smelt very bad. Bridges had been blown by R.E.s Very trying march as everyone is fatigued owing to having no proper sleep during the last 8 days. My own feet rather tender, side much better . many cigarettes received from Tollmans (London)

Brigade Order of 17.9.14 From FM French "*Express deep appreciation on splendid behaviour of troops throughout Battle of Aisne (12th.-17th.) Battle of Marne 6th – 10th.ended with flight of enemy. Immediately brought to face position of extraordinary strength. 13-14 Position attacked gallantly by British Forces passage of AISNE affected. Says he is unable to find adequate words to express admiration for magnificent conduct. French army on flank making good progress. Says that self sacrificing devotion & splendid spirit of British Army in France will carry all before it*".

Signed J. French FM CinC B.E.F.

22-9-14 Tuesday Had a good nights sleep, but woke up during the night and heard big gun firing. The Germans apparently had another try last night to take our position – but naturally failed.

Rev 6am Breakfast 7.30 Plenty of rations issued. Lovely morning – rested all day, During the afternoon German aeroplane dropped bomb into English aeroplane, missed it & did no damage. Smith-Dorrien & Shaw been chatting to troops also French & praising them up. 4th.Bn reinforcements arrived – nearly all under 20: 51 to B Coy.

23-9-14 Wednesday Routine as yesterday – Rested in same billets all day – 100 shirts & socks issued. Battalion gradually re-fitting :

Started A.C.Q.M.S.(Acting Company Quarter Master Sgt).

24-9-14 Thursday Routine as yesterday – very busy with rolls etc.

25-9-14 Friday Routine as yesterday, Parade at 5.pm & marched to VALLIE & releived R.I.R. in trenches in a position on the left of previous position. Myself drawing rations all night, consequently no sleep. Artillery fire cannot be heard, except in distance.

26-9-14 Saturday Troops standing to arms at daybreak. A lot of sniping going on. But no attack. The R.I.R. left rotten trenches, our troops trying to improve them. Only appears to be X Coy on duty in rear & on the right of us (time 5.30pm). Letter from Emmie, she still says that she is receiving no letters from me. On duty in trenches all night, a very quiet night, though the artillery are busy.

27-9-14 Sunday Under arms at 4am – issue of rum. Rumoured that 50,000 Germans are advancing, but afterwards found they are not. Releived from the trenches for the day but go back tonight, another night of anxiety . Artillery firing the whole day & shells dropping all round but no casualty's occurred up to now. Hear that R.S.F. trenches are being shelled very much, must have several casualties. Letter from Mam & Emmie to say that they have received one of my letters. Sentries sniping all day (3.20pm). In trenches all night, very cold.

28-9-14 Monday Standing to arms as usual at dawn; in trenches all day but having a rest at Coy.

HQ. Very quiet day. Big gun firing going on. About 10pm Germans attempted to break thorough our right (Buffs) but were repulsed. Lots of firing, very quiet the remainder of the night.

29-9-14 Tuesday Moved to Res. Coy billets & stayed there all day & night, had quiet time.

30-9-14 Wednesday Turned up to D Coy (Z) trenches, in trench at rear all day & moved to forward trenches under cover of darkness. Very quiet, not much big gun fire. The worst of this place is that we cannot light fire to make tea or anything.

1-10-14 Thursday Everything the same as yesterday. Trenches day & night, hear that we are getting releived . The absence of war news is very disconcerting, scarcely any firing. Very cold night, sharp frost.

2-10-14 Friday Same as yesterday (3pm) Appointed A.C.Q.M.S. 20.9.14 Authority GOC 9th Infantry Bgde. Quiet all day. Moved at 7pm (relieved by Staff's.) Marched till 4am to SERVUANY & billeted in farm

3-10-14 Saturday Took extreme care to dodge aeroplanes as we kept under cover the whole of the following day. Marched at 6pm to TROESNES & billeted, same routine as yesterday.

4-10-14 Sunday Marched at 6pm the CREPY & billeted in private houses. The last three nights we did about 15-20 miles. Got into billets about 3am. Very tired.

5-10-14 Monday Have been marching in a Westerly direction (12 Noon). All troops allowed in town, shops open, well stocked with provisions. Madam came into our bedroom selling sweets. Marched at 6pm, had glorious send off.

6-10-14 Tuesday Arrived at GUIDOKE about 2am & billeted in farm buildings. Marched off again at 7am to entrain (6 miles).

Entrained at 1.30pm and left for destination unknown. Stopped the night by train at AMIENS. Trying to bail water by candles. Passed over very many bridges which had been blown up by the Germans, but since repaired by French troops. Scores of train loads of troops passed through the night.

7-10-14 Wednesday Rations served, Bully and biscuits about 6am. Troops all buying bread. 18 of my Coy got 168hrs, No.2 (*Field Punishment ?*) for leaving train etc. Moved about 10am (destination unknown). Arrived PONT-REMY about 11.30am. Marched to BUIGNY-de-MUROUCK near ABBEVILLE and billeted for the night.

8-10-14 Thursday Reveille anytime. Rested in billet all day. Nothing unusual happened.

9-10-14 Friday Marched at 1.35pm until about 7am to CALMOUT (1k South) and rested.

10-10-14 Saturday Marched at 12.30am about 5 miles and halted till 8am Taken up in motor lorries & conveyed to SAINT-LEX-PERNES (36 miles). Went onto outpost duty (5&6) passed uneventful night except that we could get in touch with N.F.

11-10-14 Sunday Marched off about 7am about 12 miles. Passed lots of French troops, but otherwise very quiet. Got into billets about 6pm at BUSNIES.

12-10-14 Monday Marched off at 6.30 am. Hear that artillery very near. French Cavalry had battle in vicinity yesterday, but it was not decisive. Halted at present on side of road about 5 kilos from enemy . French Cavalry in front (10.30am) . Moved forward a few more miles & took up a position covering a village. One platoon went into village. Lots of sniping by Germans, but saw none. Hear that village was taken and lost three times by French during.....night.

1st Royal Scots advanced through us to attack a wood held by the enemy, hear they lost 4 killed and 60 wounded. We retired about 1 mile & billeted for the night in farmhouse.

13-10-14 Tuesday Moved off 4.30 about 3 miles into VIELLE-CHAPELLE and halted, apparently in General Reserve. R.S.F., N.F. and Lincoln's in big attack. Saw church which Germans shelled yesterday and burnt out. 9 prisoners taken this morning all different regiments. RF billets for night (7pm) Spent quiet night

14-10-14 Wednesday Standing to arms at 5.30 am but did not march off. Heavy fire going on in the vicinity all day. RF still in reserve. General Hamilton killed by a shell, fell in on artillery post about 6.30 - 8pm Big battle raging in the vicinity or not far away from the village. Firing died down & we spent a peaceful night.

174 Reinforcements joined.

15-10-14 Thursday Same programme as yesterday, lots of firing (11am) Paraded at 12.30 (consequently ad to abandon apple field. Marched through V.C. [Vielle-Chapelle] about 2 miles. X Coy attacked with W on its right. ~~Germans holding village in front & sniping from houses. Couldn't drive them out, so entrenched. Held position until next morning.~~ Ordered to take a road said t be held by German Cavalry. Took road and held it for the night..

16-10-14 Friday Moved off about 7am & marched some distance toward another village. X Coy to attack, Z Coy on left. Made the attack, Pte. Youngman shot in thigh. Held ground for the night, which had been taken.

17-10-14 Saturday Operation resumed at 6.30am. Battn advanced through AUBERS & attacked in Easterly direction another village. X Coy had very busy day, attacked two positions and took them. Stayed night HILIERs on outpost duty. No one apparently knew where X Coy were until next morning.

18-10-14 Sunday Ordered to resume operations at 6.30, still in village of HILIERs, lots of sniping going on. During the last three days : Casualties 1 killed 6 wounded. As usual, Sunday, the Germans very busy, lot of heavy gun firing going on. X Coy in reserve all day, been relieved by Z Coy. (Time 5pm).

19-10-14 Monday Germans attacked during the night, but X Coy not required. Operations resumed, lots of shell fire, still in reserve position. In the afternoon R.I.R. attacked and took village to our left front. Firing going on nearly all night long

20-10-14 Tuesday Operations resumed at 6.30am, Germans shelled out billets heavily. One shell burst near door leaving 2 killed and 4 wounded. X Coy moved to safer place. About 10.am ordered to attack. Two platoons sent forward under very heavy shell fire, could not use their rifles after lying there about 2 hours, forced to withdraw on being reinforced by RS Fusrs. Capt.Carey, Sgt's Stacey, Woolmer, Finn, + 23 others wounded + 1 killed. Coy dug more trenches and spent night in them, wet night.

21-10-14 Wednesday No rations: ordered to eat iron rations. Coy still in trenches under heavy shell fire, no casualties up to now (3pm) Hear that 4 Div had big success yesterday.

No diary entry 22-10 to 30-10-14

31-10-14 Saturday During the past few days have been in very heavy fighting. Retired at night and took up new position about three miles back. Very hard time in trenches. Had big fight on 25th & 26th caused by R.I.R. leaving trenches. On 26th. Had fight in the afternoon. Lost 125 NCO's and men including all officers. Myself + 12 men only came out of the trench after the Germans charged. Held trenches again afterwards, other companies had a bayonet charge & had many casualties. Withdrawn from trenches on Thursday last and marched in rear of line some miles. Moved daily from one billet to another, gradually getting nearer the left flank direction of OSTEND.

No diary entry 1-11 to 3-11.

4-11-14 Thursday Arrived at BAILLEUL yesterday, a big town, billeted here. Gen Smith-Dorrien inspected us this morning and told us we were second to none in the British Army.

No diary entry 5-11- to 10-11.

11-11-14 Wednesday Since last entry we marched from BALLEUL to YPRES and occupied trenches 3mls E. of YPRES. Germans attacked with great vigour night and day but were repulsed at all points, very hard fighting under awful artillery fire. Germans generally attacked at 2pm or 6pm then again at dawn, first preceded by awful bombardment. Tried to reform X Coy yesterday, but was struck by a shell in the rt shoulder and head, spent the night in dressing station. Germans appeared

to have been reinforced and attacked very vigorously this morning & succeeded in breaking through. Drove RF's back by artillery fire. Myself made my way back to hospital at YPRES and had wound dressed. RF reinforced by about 150 men of 6th.Bn. Yesterday who are very timid. Many men suffering from shock. Casualties killed and wounded very heavy. Moved to POPERHU same night.

12-11-14 Moved to GAZEBROUK by motor bus, 1000 wounded admitted.

13/14-11-14 Entrained for BOULOUGNE arrived there early morning and admitted to hospital.

15-11-14 Sent to Convalescent Camp BOULOUGNE

16-11-14 Short Route March

17-11-14 Route March at 11.00am, feeling much better

DIARY ENDS

Casualty details of those soldiers mentioned in Sgt. Osborne's diary

MORRANT, L-11467 CPL.CHARLES

Enlisted 2RF 6.7.05. Cpl 4.2.13

DIED 10-9-14

AGE 30

Son of Joseph & Sarah Morrart of Rainham Lodge Cottage, Upminster, Essex

Born Hampshire / Enlisted Hounslow / Lived Upminster

RUBY, L-8892 PTE. ALFRED JAMES

DIED 10-9-14

Born Staines / Enlisted Hounslow / Lived Staines

LETT, L-15162 L-CPL. WILLIAM JOHN

DIED 14-9-14

Born Battersea / Enlisted London / Lived Battersea

COLLINS, L-10249 L-CPL. ALBERT

DIED 15-9-14 as a result of Allied Artillery Fire

AGE 28

Husband of Emily N. Collins 9 Wood Street Lambeth

Born Westminster / Enlisted London / Lived Lambeth

WATTS, L-15129 PTE. ARTHUR JAMES

Born Kensington / Enlisted London / Lived Fulham

DIED 19-9-14



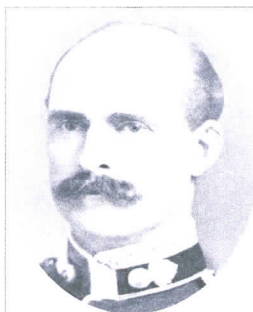
LA FERTE-SOUS-JOUARE MEMORIAL

FINN, L-10404 SGT. CHARLES HAROLD
DIED 22.10.14
Born Tottenham / Enlisted Aldershot / Lived Dalston



LE TOURET MEMORIAL

McMAHON, BRIGADIER GENERAL NORMAN REGINALD DSO
Commanding 4th. Battn. Royal Fusiliers
KILLED IN ACTION 11-11-14
Attached to HQ 10th. Infantry Brigade
Served in the South African War 1899-1902
Son of General Sir Thomas McMahon



PLOEGSTREET MEMORIAL