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it was at its full value only worth a halfpenny, it was rather a shock to us after the accounts we had read of the kindly treatment received by our soldiers passing through France, it was our first impression of the French people and it was by no means in their favour, we certainly did not want anything for nothing, but it was pure robbery the prices we were asked for coffee bread etc.

We travelled all through New Years day, and did not arrive at our destination until 10 pm that

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night, after some 33 hours cooped up in a cattle truck, we pulled in to Bailleul railway station just after 10 pm, a regular picnic for us then started it took us hours to sort us a find out the harness, haul the guns off and get ready for the road again, it rained almost the whole time, and it was bitterly cold; it was here that we first saw signs of the actual war, Verey lights could be quite plainly seen, in fact it was only about 5 or six miles to Britz's front line it was rather quiet this night

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apart from an occasion  
at road from the guns,  
and the very lights one  
could imagine ~~themselves~~  
anywhere but within actual  
range of the German guns;  
finally we were ready  
to start about 3, am, and  
with a guide in the lead  
we made for our first  
billet some seven miles  
distant, with the guides  
help we managed to lose  
ourselves some 3 or 4 times,  
and it was not till 6  
am that we at last found  
a rest, we pulled into an  
old farmyard, the mud  
was already churned up  
to a considerable depth,

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in this we plunged and  
struggled about till we  
had the horses securely  
picketed and fed, this  
took us well over an  
hour, and at last we  
were free to look after  
ourselves, we were marched  
to another farm house a  
quarter of a mile away,  
we were shown a large  
barn half full of straw,  
this was to be our home,  
the lads simply threw  
themselves down, and slept.  
I did not even bother to  
take off my accoutrements,  
I slept with all my equip-  
ment on, I was too tired  
to do anything, I just wanted

to sleep, we were allowed to sleep for about 3 hours. We had to turn to look after the horses, by the end of the day, we were all glad to seek the straw, and have a decent sleep.

We remained at this place (Strazule) for about 11 days, our day was very much the same as another, it rained religiously every day, and the cold kept the rain coming, almost every night a couple of pals and myself went for a stroll into one of the villages close by, it was interesting to us to sit in an estaminet,

(Bar or wine shop) and listen to the gabber of the french folk, these places are always cosy and warm and one can procure a plate of potato chips and three eggs for about 1/2 coffee and bread included, I became very anxious to learn the french language, and during my stay there in one way and another I picked up a good deal of it, enough anyway to enable us to order food, and that is the most important thing as far as I was concerned; all this time we were only about 11 miles from the Lure, and

We could hear the guns quite distinctly, sometimes hardly stopping all day and night, we were getting very impatient stopping behind the line so long, and on the night of Jan 12<sup>th</sup> our sergeant Major dramatically announced that our section was to be going into action on the morrow, our enthusiasm knew no bounds, we decided that such a wonderful event must be fittingly celebrated, we drank good fortunes to one another that night with bubbling, sparkling champagne, the last voice I remember

hearing that night was Jimmy Carlton, he was giving voice to Yaroo! Well — the Col. Reville was blown the following morning at 5, and then commenced the worst day I can ever remember experiencing, for two hours we were plunging and tearing about in the mud with the horses before daylight, the cold was intense, and rain was falling, our hands were blue with the cold, we could hardly do anything with them, it was almost fearful to be trying to put a nose bag on a horse, get it &

on, and then have it swacked wet and muddy into our face, it makes one inclined to stand off and call them all the nasty names one could think of, I was detailed to wash 30 nose bags, thick and hard with mud in a running stream that only the rain prevented from freezing, it took me over an hour to do this, & during that hour I did not know whether to laugh or cry; we had breakfast at 8 and at 10 am we were ready for the road; we started out in a heavy snow storm, we were

wet through, and feeling about as comfortable as a snake on an ant bed, when the snow stopped the rain started, and vice versa, a dirtier day one could not possibly imagine; we passed through Baillenc & Hazebroock, both large towns; we were only going very slow for we did not want to arrive at our position (in Armentières) before darkness set in, we arrived in Armentières about dusk, and we soon got an idea of what havoc war makes, ruined churches and houses on every hand; we drew into

our position about 7 pm  
 this was the 13<sup>th</sup> Jan  
 1917, just 12 months to the  
 day after I went into camp,  
 a strange coincidence, I  
 had travelled a good way  
 and seen a lot during  
 that time, at last we  
 were in action, and I  
 had realised my ambition,  
 I had been anxiously  
 waiting for this time for  
 many months, and at last  
 my wish was fulfilled,  
 when I first joined up,  
 I was under the impress-  
 ion that the artillery on  
 going into action, horses  
 would be galloping,  
 guns firing and all

kind of a rumpus, but  
 my ideas were all astray,  
 here were we quietly going  
 into our position after  
 dark, no sound except  
 a few Lewis guns rat-  
 a-tat-ing in the trenches  
 nearly two miles away,  
 still I must say I prefer  
 the quiet way, to the  
 way my imagination had  
 it; the position we were  
 taking up was an old  
 one, we were to take over  
 from an Imperial battery  
 who were still there, they  
 were to remain with us  
 for a few days until we  
 got into the running of  
 things, and then we were to

carry on; fortunately we were not expected to engage Tripz that night, for we were all dead beat, and were thankful to lie down on the floor of an old, shattered house and give ourselves up to a good sleep.

The following day we made our debut in the firing line, we registered our guns, and sent a few shells on to Tripz trenches just by way of introducing ourselves; when we had time to look around us, we found we were very lucky in getting this position, we were splendidly concealed, had splendid gun pits, strong

enough we considered to stop at 5.9 shells, for bullets we had the partly ruined houses around us, our subsection's billet was an especially good one, protected us from all kinds of weather, in one corner was a stove, in splendid order too; we drew our rations from the Wagon lines some five or six miles behind us, and we did our own cooking, a couple of the boys and myself went on a foraging expedition, we ransacked the houses in our vicinity, inside these we found confusion everywhere, signs of a hurried departure was everywhere.

Wardrobes, chest of drawers etc with clothes thrown in anyhow, in some houses we found the beds only just a little disarranged, childrens rocking horses and games lying on the floor, all seemed to show how hurriedly the french fled before the Germans in the early part of the war, it seemed criminal to us just then that war should bring such ruin with it; anyway our party soon furnished our billet with two good tables, about 9 or 10 oak chairs, plenty of good crockery & cutlery, Kerosene lamps, frying

pans, saucepans, Kettles and kinds of cooking utensils, before many days we were as comfortable almost as if we were living in civilised quarters, instead of just 3000 yards from front &ritz, for sleeping in we had bunks ranged up deck fashion around the room, with nice soft mattress's to make us feel quite comfortable.

We were in this position about two months, and if the cold was not so severe we would have really enjoyed the situation, we were not long in action before things began to worsen



up in the Armentieres section things were very quiet when we first arrived there, but it was not long before we began to raid and otherwise annoy him, we shelled him constantly, and every few nights our boys raided his trenches, mostly successful, but at times disastrous to us, two of the most successful raids during his time was one made by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion, and another later on by picked men of the whole of the division, this one was splendidly organised and as well carried; at 10 pm on this night we opened up

a short but fierce barrage, and kept hammering his trenches for about 10 minutes, Fritz expected us to raid him, and replied with a very sharp fire on our front line and No man's land, but all our men were drawn well back to our support lines, and no damage resulted; then at 12 mid-night the real thing was carried out, our men were waiting out in no man's land a few minutes before 12, and on the stroke of 12 all the guns on our front opened up a terrific fire, on his trenches, for 5 minutes his front line was

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bombaraded, then the barrage  
lifted on to his 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>  
supports, when our fire  
lifted our boys hopp'd over,  
but they only found dead  
Germans, our fire had killed  
hundreds, out of the 1000  
men who went over we  
only lost about 100 casualties  
all told, most of these only  
slightly wounded; some were  
or so after this at a  
presentation of medals to  
the boys. General Plumer  
commanding the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army  
Corps complimented the 3<sup>rd</sup>  
division on its work since  
joining the field, expressed  
his confidence in its men,  
and said that although

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we had done good and  
important work, we would  
soon be called upon to  
face a most difficult and  
arduous task, as great as  
any that had been yet set  
to British troops.

When we the  
Artillery first came into action  
we were rather doubtful of  
the reception we would re-  
ceive from our Infantry, but  
we were in action over a  
week before many of them knew  
we were at their back support-  
ing them, they were still under  
the impression the Germans were  
firing over them, this lack of  
confidence on their part was  
due to the wretched showing

made by some of our officers while on Salisbury Plains, and really they cannot be blamed, it is not wise to know or rather think that our own side is likely to send shells meant for Fritz into our own line; but we soon established ourselves and before many weeks we heard expressions of confidence on every side, many of them openly said they would follow our fire anywhere, this was very gratifying to us for we had worked hard to perfect ourselves, and it made our work a lot more pleasant, and as time went on their good

opinion of our shooting grew. About the middle of March we received orders to take over a position from the N. G's, this was only about two miles away, this was only 800 yards from Fritz's front line, but was well sheltered and concealed, although not nearly so comfortable as our last position it was by no means bad, and during our three weeks there we did not have a single casualty, whereas we had 13 in the previous one, at times a few shells landed rather close and caused a little diversion, but here we learned to have a holy respect for machine

gun bullets, as soon as  
darkness set in he peppered  
all around us, one right  
through crawling along a  
road for about a quarter of  
mile on hands and knees  
while the zipp zipp over  
my head played hours worst  
hours I earned the name of  
"Duck em", a pack of mine  
with us was christened "Doofer  
em".

At last another  
shift was ordered, this time  
to a position in Plug St.  
the name is rather sugges-  
tive, and I must say it  
is very appropriate, for  
Fritz plugs it hard and  
often, we were not long

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here, only about 10 days,  
but we made ourselves  
felt by Fritz, and he did  
not fail to return the  
compliment, the day we vac-  
ated this position he ranged  
on to us, we were relieved  
by a victorian battery, and  
we learnt some few weeks  
later that on the following  
day he planted over 300  
H.2 & S.95 in and around  
the battery, it seems we  
just got out in time; this  
was about the middle of  
April and our division  
were ordered out for a  
spell and to reorganise, our  
battery all joined up and  
we took the road towards

Boulogne; the weather was still very bad, rain, snow and the cold still made themselves felt, instead of as we thought riding on the waggons, we were ordered to march, for what reason Heaven and the military alone knew; the first day we marched about 18 miles up hill and down dale, raining all the time, our pack must have weighed over 50 lbs, and by the time we reached our first halting place, we were sick sore, and very sorry for ourselves, the next day it was the same, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> about 5 pm we arrived at

our destination a little village named Secc, about 9 or 10 miles from Boulogne; shortly after we arrived here beautiful weather set in, winter had gone, one day changed everything from cold and miserableness to sunshine and a feeling that it was good to be alive; our stay here was proving very pleasant in a week everything seemed changed, the days were warm and sunny trees began to bud, and the little spot where we were proved a beautiful resting place, it was nicely situated and the French villagers seemed altogether diff-

erent to the miserable set we had been dealing with; we were given a fair amount of leave, and we made the most of it, and I had many an enjoyable stroll to one or another village and town in that locality, a number of the boys rode into Boulogne, but this was denied me. Someone who had socialistic ideas managed to rob me of a goodly number of francs, so I had to be content with hearing from the other lads their adventures, in that rather gay city.

A few days before leaving we held a brigade sports, it proved to be very

successful, the best item of the day was a championship race (horse) my fancy won, and my winnings enabled me to have several good meals of eggs & chips.

Altogether we were in this place about three weeks, but at last we were ordered back into action, we were rather sorry to leave, for we had enjoyed our rest there so much, in that peaceful spot it was hard to imagine that such a thing as war was going on in the same country. Our journey back was much the same as in coming, except that now the days were hot

but it was much better than the bitter cold and wet days we had been having for months, after about three days march we landed back in almost the same place we had left, we took up new horse lines, our battery did not go into action for two days, when the train came I was ordered to remain at the wagon lines, several new gunners had to be trained, so a number of the older hands had to remain behind, I did not mind the arrangement, for I knew I would have rather a good time with some of the drivers

who were great pals of mine; I remained with the horses for about three weeks I had very little work to do, just a matter of seeing the wagons etc were in good going order, during this time a few pals and myself spent our evenings strolling around the country, it was looking beautiful just then, trees were in full leaf, and some of the spots were really lovely, several nights I took ammunition up to the battery, Fritz was shelling very heavily around the battery position just then and on one or two occasions the drivers gave the horses their

head, and let 'em out at times it seems as if Fritz was intent on chasing our wagons; about a week before I left the wagon line, a party was detailed to proceed to our front line trenches, and build a steel observation tower, I was one of the party, we arrived at the front line about 10 minutes to 9, we sat down talking to a few of the infantry sads and were not there more than 5 minutes when Fritz opened up on us he followed up his barrage after about 5 minutes, but our machine guns cut him to pieces, only two succeeded in reaching our line, and

a few seconds afterwards a small dust pan would be quite large enough to hold what was left of them, two minutes after he started our artillery was on to him, and I had my first sensation of what it is like in the trenches when Fritz is pelting his hardest directly at one, and our shells just skimming overhead on their way to Fritz's line two hundred yards away, he bombarded for about an hour, and finally we decided to abandon the job that night, and made back for the battery, we considered ourselves lucky to get out of it so well.



About the 25<sup>th</sup> May all the gunners were ordered up to the battery, we all knew that we intended to advance at Messines, and his work lay ahead of us, on arrival at the battery position we found plenty doing, Fritz was shelling us around, sending up ammunition dumps everywhere, our bombardment was growing heavier, sometimes during the day, and almost every night we rained his trenches for the first few days my gun was to the rear of the battery and under an old apple tree, we were told we were put there to draw the fire

off the battery, it certainly served the purpose, on the morning of May 28 (2 am) we were supporting the Infantry in a raid, Fritz was sending shrapnel overhead, one of our boys caught a piece in the shoulder, luckily not very serious, still he will have cause to remember "under the shade of the old apple tree."

Daily now the fire grew more intense, it was decided to work two shifts on the gun, 8 hours on and the same off, we did not know what day now that the attack was to commence; our position was the leading one on our side, and to the rear of us,

for miles guns were everywhere, it was really wonderful, guns were concealed anywhere and everywhere reaching as far back as Steinwerck 7 miles where 12" and 15" mounted on trucks bombarded his far back defences.

On Sunday June 3<sup>rd</sup> (King's birthday) about 5 pm were having tea, feeling quite peaceful, when whiz bang, Fritz ranged on to us, we knew what it meant, we expressed the hope that he would wait till we had finished tea before he commenced business properly; in this he obliged us, and a few minutes past 6, the first of what proved

the toughest week of my existence commenced; 8" and 10" shells rained all about us, luckily for us the majority fell on to the left and rear of our position, what was fortunate for us was the reverse for other batteries soon damage ~~was~~ began to mount up, two of our dumps went skywards, the Officers billet began to look sorry for itself, several dumps at the rear were blazing away, and now and then a stretcher could be seen moving across the field; this fire was kept up all through the night, but what was far worse was the poison

gas he sent us in shells starting just on 10pm, this was the first time we had been properly under gas, while at Armentieres he sent a little over, but half an hour and it was all over, our subsection had practically the only ~~battery~~ dug out in the battery, it was quite comfortable, but it was not proof against anything larger than a whiz-bang; into this crowded some 40 men, no room hardly to move, all had gas masks on, and in there we were compelled to remain all night, during the night he shelled incessantly, we considered that he must have sent over 20,000.

we could not sleep all night, we simply had to stick it, when dawn broke, there was never a more thankful set of men, we left the dug out, and when we looked around at the damage done, we could hardly credit the change, everywhere was enormous holes, trees blown down, great heavy guns twisted and bent, and blown in all kinds of positions, we still found it necessary to keep our masks on, the gas hung all along the ground in a great gray cloud or mist, we were hungry so we decided to walk to the rear some two or three miles to a village, we would then be

behind the gas, and could  
 secure a meal of some sort  
 or other, it was a weird  
 sight walking along that road,  
 we passed hundreds of infantry,  
 all with their masks on, and  
 looking a strange sight indeed,  
 after about a mile we found  
 the air much clearer, and  
 we took our masks off the  
 first time for 9 hours, altho'  
 we did not feel in a very  
 humorous vein, we could not  
~~help~~ help laughing at the  
 appearances of our anothers  
 faces, our nose's were all  
 red and sore, our eyes were  
 swollen with crying, and I  
 am quite certain had we  
 tried to make ourselves look

disreputable we could not  
 have succeeded better, still  
 dirt and all, we managed  
 to enjoy the inevitable meal  
 of eggs and chips served us  
 about 5 am, we shelled him  
 very heavily that day, it gave  
 us a little satisfaction, but  
 before darkness set in we  
 prayed that he would not send  
 any more gas over, our prayers  
 however were unavailing, for  
 at 10:30pm he commenced again,  
 another night of pure misery  
 for us; every night from then  
 on he gassed us, our casualties  
 commenced to grow rapidly, we  
 sent a number away gassed, sev-  
 eral were wounded, and three  
 of the boys paid the full amount.

Tuesday night June 6<sup>th</sup> we were  
 told that the following morning  
 the attack commenced, all  
 that night he was sending  
 over gas and a large quantity  
 of high explosive, at 3 am  
 I put <sup>out</sup> the aiming lights, loaded  
 the gun, and everyone was  
 standing by the gun, the attack  
 was to commence at 3.10 am  
 (Zero time) about 10 seconds  
 before this the great mines  
 under Messines ridge were  
 successfully blown up, we  
 were about a mile from them  
 and the shock made our  
 pit sway like a boat, a  
 second or so afterwards such  
 a bombardment commenced,  
 all the guns seemed to fire

together, the attack on Messines  
 had commenced, we won through  
 but at a fearful cost, still  
 the Authorities say our casual-  
 ties were light, considering  
 the advantage gained, possibly  
 they are right; we had not  
 taken off our masks since 10 pm  
 the previous night, and we found  
 great trouble working in them,  
 our faces were all wet  
 and stinging, and the masks  
 kept slipping, and when this  
 happened the gas crept in, on  
 account of this drawback our  
 fire was not nearly so rapid,  
 as it would otherwise have  
 been, still we managed to get  
 away 3 shells a minute per  
 gun, even then the bombard-

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went was terrific, up to the  
time our fire started we were  
being subjected to fairly heavy  
shelling, but 10 seconds after  
the mines went off, he ceased  
to shell us, and devoted all  
his artillery to our infantry,  
who were slowly but surely  
pushing forward; not a shell  
fell near us all that day,  
it was such a change to be  
able to wander about, & no  
chance of stopping a bit of  
Krupps; the attack commenced  
before dawn, about an hour  
later it was fairly light,  
and from time to time we  
witnessed some thrilling in-  
cidents in the air, great numbers  
of our machines (aeroplanes)

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flying quite close to the ground  
just over the tree tops, patrolling  
up and down, keeping just  
above our infantry, directing  
and controlling their movements,  
several Hun Plans came into  
touch with our machines, but  
were never given a chance, that  
morning I saw three Bosche  
Plans brought down, quite  
close to us, on one occasion  
one of our machines shot a  
wing off his opponent's machine  
when at a great height, it  
was a sorry spectacle to see  
pieces of the machine coming  
down one after another, the  
body came first, falling over  
and over, the wing followed,  
reaching the ground minutes later.

two others followed after this, they landed on the ground with a terrific smash. There was little doubt as to who held the supremacy of the air just then, these air battles are very thrilling, the men who handle the machines are of the fairest of the fairest, and in justice to Fritz he is little behind our chaps in daring!

About 9 am on the morning of the attack the first batch of prisoners passed our guns, there was about 60 or 70 of them, I was anxious to see what sort of chaps they were, but a poor type of men it would be hard to imagine, most of them were in a high state of nerves,

several of them could speak English a little, they said they were under our fire for days, and that its effect was tremendous, they seemed quite surprised on arrival at the dressing station to be given nice hot coffee, several of our boys who were wounded were carried in by the Germans, on several occasions I saw two Fritz's carrying our lads in and stretchers; during this and the next few days, magnificent work was done by the stretcher bearers, their bravery was wonderful, and no credit can be too high for them, their work is hard, and very dangerous, the latter they seemed to disregard altogether, at times parties of stretcher bearers

carrying their burden through the smoke from the shell bursts, the work done by these men is simply splendid, and has earned the admiration of all who has seen them.

Our gun now was nearly always in action, sometimes for 8 hours at a time, the barrel was hot, and steam rose from all the oiling joints, it was not possible to fire rapidly when the guns are in this condition, but the idea was to keep up a continuous bombardment, and not give Fritz a rest; Thursday, Friday & Saturday were much the same as previous days, gas & high explosive shells still came our way, we were

working at top speed all day, and at night we just laid down and waited for daylight, when we knew the gas would cease, during that week some of us managed to get about 12 hours sleep, we consider ourselves very lucky if we averaged two hours a day.

On Sunday June 10<sup>th</sup> Fritz ceased to gas us about 6 am, at 7 the dug out was pretty clear of it, I fell asleep till 9 when I got up, it was my turn to get the breakfast, our cook house was some 50 yards distant, I drew our breakfast, consisting of bully beef and some beautiful Cocoa sent us as comforts, the smell of the Cocoa



was glorious, I felt I could drink a bucket of it, it was so tempting, I called the boys, and three of us were just making a start when whiz bang, the breakfast was wasted, I picked myself up a few seconds later, and started to sum up the damages, one thing I was quite certain about, that was that I had the wind up properly, I found a magnet of metal had found a lodging in my side, I pulled this out, and with the help of a pal made for the dressing station, two other boys got a few scratches at the same time, luckily nothing serious, I had only about 60 yds to go to reach the first aid dressing station, here I was bound

up, injected with various doses, and a few minutes later was in a car, the first move towards saying Good bye to whiz bang, gas, and other unpleasant acquaintances, about an hour after being hit, I reached Stenverck Casualty Clearing station, within 10 minutes after my arrival I was operated on, quick work indeed, at this station there is a wonderful system, no time is wasted, and every thing is done for a purpose, I was feeling rather onerous just then, the effects of the gas I inhaled was making itself felt, and for the next three days I spent a very trying time, as Gas specialist informed us that the effects would not last more than a