

savory odours. Pigs, calves, fowls and tame rabbits were run down or show down and in the cellars of old houses were found wines and champagnes, but Fritz seemed to have a special spite on these localities and sometimes much ironmongery had to be dodged before one could get at the goods.

This land of plenty was soon stripped of its riches and the troops had to take in their belts and exist on Army rations again.

On April 1st the 7th suffered a great loss in the deaths of Lieutenant-Colonel W. Churchus, Capt. Greenshields and Lieut. Radford, all of whom were killed by one shell which burst in the Officers' Quarters at Heilly. Major James now became Acting C.O. of the Brigade. About this time there was unusual aerial activity. It was not an uncommon sight to see a score of planes "boxing on". The 21st April saw the downfall of the crack German Aviator, Capt. Baron Von Richthofen. His machine was forced to a low altitude by British fliers and then accounted for by an Australian Machine-Gunner from the ground. The plane crashed not very far from some of our guns. Every night bombing raids took place by hostile raiders and heavy casualties were caused among the horses and some of the men also fell victims to the bombs.

On April 4th the enemy commenced a very heavy bombardment on our front line and back areas, following it up with an Infantry attack and succeeded in occupying Hamel and Bouzencourt. On account of the Bosche taking ground it was necessary to switch the guns at right angles to the usual front and so enfiladed his hard-won positions. He was driven out after losing heavily.

The capture of Villars-Bretonneux by the Germans took place on the 24th April. The same night our Infantry by great daring and initiative made a silent attack without the usual Artillery assistance and drove the enemy out at the point of the bayonet, and, with machine-gun fire, capturing many prisoners in the operation. That day hostile artillery was very active, great quantities of gas shells and high explosives being "put over". Some of our guns were knocked out and the entire Headquarters Staff with three or four exceptions was gassed. One of the gas casualties was Major James, and his place was taken by Major Irwin.

The 7th Brigade went into reserve soon after the Villars-Bretonneux stunt and the wagon lines moved to Frechencourt. Some Yank Engineers were billeted in this village and baseball matches were soon the rage. The Brigade team did very creditably, considering our players were tackling the Yank at his National game.

On May the 9th the guns went back into action in the vicinity of Brasle near Albert, but were relieved again on the 14th. Next morning the Brigade was on the "wallaby". After two days travelling we arrived at our destination which was the village of Coquerel on the Somme Canal. Spring was merging into Summer and the weather was fine and warm. The country through which the Brigade travelled was very picturesque and fertile. For miles the road followed the valley of the Somme River. Now and again we came to the swift-running Canal with its many Locks and bridges. Rich young crops of velvety, green grew right to the roadside and the fields were divided by luxuriant hawthorn hedges, and, here and there woods of tender green cast deep shadows, forming cool glades. The air was laden with the scent of flowers, the Lilac, the Elder and Acacia all bloomed along the country lanes, and, in the cottage gardens. On the eve of the first day the Brigade occupied wagon lines on the outskirts of Bourdon, a "one-horse" village, where every second house appeared to be an Estaminet. The following morning the journey was continued and the towns of Flixcourt and Long were passed through en route. The country gradually became steeper and with the exception of thick woods was all under cultivation. Coquerel was reached at about three in the afternoon and after "feed-up" a rush was made to the Canal which flowed near at hand. Here the troops enjoyed the luxury of a swim, a pastime we rarely had the opportunity to indulge in. The Canal at this point averaged 30 yards in width, and the water was very deep and swift. A tow-path followed the bank and both sides of the stream were overhung with heavy foliage. At the lower end of the town the Canal was spanned by a bridge. The village itself was ancient and tumbled down, and the majority of the villagers looked as old as the village. There were a few exceptions and they were "very nice too", Ahem.

Now old girlie I must stop - the Editor wont allow me any more space. In my next I shall tell you all about our spell at Coquerel (voted the best spell ever) and our subsequent doings in the line.

Sink one for me at Farmers and accept best love

from

Algernon.