

Mobilised at Caxton Hall, 5th August 1914.

Various marches with full equipment and 150 rounds of ammunition around London - Wimbledon Common - Clapham Common - Regents and Hyde Parks, etc etc and received ovations from the public which we felt we were not entitled to. Practised "Extended Order" drill, etc in Hyde Park to the great amusement of everyone. Various false alarms and any amount of rumours: we seem to keep our spirits up by concocting rumours, listening to others and having faith in them until we know for certain they cannot possibly come true.

Left for Watford 23rd August: very large crowd right the way to Cricklewood. The whole Brigade (with the Scottish in rear), consisting of the Queen's Westminsters, Kensingtons Civil Service and Artists Rifles, marched down. Not one of ours fell out. Bivouacked at Whitchurch and continued next morning to Fortunes Farm - Battalion HQ. At Whitchurch one of the ammunition mules ran amok and we had our first "casualty", one of the transport being badly hurt. Luckily the frisky beast of burden was caught and did no further damage. Though a very hot and tiring march, it was very cold at night and we were glad when morning came and we got on the way. Climbed up Stanmore Hill to the tune of the pipes which were a great help. "H" Company billeted at Fortunes Farm in stables - nice and clean with fresh straw. We were able to use the hose for cold bathes which was a great advantage, some of us indulging in a cold tub three times a day! - first thing at morning or after Swedish and after the morning and afternoon parades - luxuries we missed in France. Pretty hard six weeks training and not much excitement, but plenty of fun and - - - plenty of rumours! Egypt on the 17th September was the most persistent and fellows would come in with tales of "pith helmets" and "drill jackets" at the Q.M. stores. It was so strong that men in other regiments knew for a fact that Egypt was our destination - no such luck! Foreign service men were inoculated so that we knew a move was soon to be made. Whilst here a good many of us had our hair cut with nail scissors - three pairs at work! We looked more like niggers or pie-bald rats than respectable soldiers. (Jackson; Low (died after war - leg amputation) and Shepherd were the barbers.)

Copy of Company Orders, 13th September, 1914.

Reveille 5 am. "H" Co. parade 6.15 am sharp. Any dress - with rifle and bayonet - to exchange for new pattern. L/C McDowell to take the cooks, scouts, etc rifles and exchange them also. Leaky oil bottles to be changed at 9 am. Battalion parade Fortunes Farm, 11 am. full marching order for inspection by the Brigadier Gen. Munro. Must be ready tomorrow - kitbags packed, etc.

12.9.14 Went to Brickett Wood in the pouring rain, with Low, Wallace, Baird and met Horace there, and Baker.

13.9.14 Rumours of our departure heard whilst coming home from Brickett wood on Saturday night, September 12th. Stopped by one of our Cyclist Scouts about 9.30 pm, who told us that all Passes would be cancelled and the men brought back to Camp. Battalion to leave here for France on Tuesday. Great excitement and singing. Sentry stopped us as we arrived back at 9.40 pm instead of 9 pm under the impression that Leave was extended until 10 on account of a Concert at the Asylum. Told Corporal of the Guard (R.O. Swanson) the news - "another concoction" - etc etc. Told others out at the Concert that Capt. Lindsay of "E" Company had made public declaration of our leaving for the Continent, and Mr Anderson confirmed the information in reading Battn. Orders. Kept to Billets absolutely. Busied ourselves with washing etc and renewing equipment and clothing. Allowed to visit other Billets in the evening so went round to Brickett Wood with Deschamps, Campbell and Shepherd, and had a very good sing-song there. Also saw Horace.

14.9.14 Horace and some chums came to say goodbye for the last time. Dished out with the new short rifles, do not drill with these, and get finally ready – do some "washing".

15.9.14 Reveille 4.30 am. Breakfast 5 am. Plenty of time to ourselves, which we employ in writing letters, cleaning Billets etc etc. Left Waterdale at 8.30 am and gave Mr Blomfield and others a rousing cheer. Right Half Battn. "A" to "D" Companies left about 6.30 am. Left Half assembled at "F" Company's Lines at 9 am and various presents from St Columbia's were presented to the men (clothing, cigarettes etc). Marched to Watford Station 9.30 am and were given a rousing "send-off" all the way to the Station. Some of the Home Service men saw us off and the Band of the 13th London (Kensington) played us to the Station, such popular tunes as "Hold Your Hand Out Naughty Boy", winding up with "Auld Lang Syne". Streets were crowded and a huge crowd saw us off from Watford Station. Just before the train started somebody called out my name, saying that my Mother was looking for me with a parcel. Horace dashed away and as the train was on the move came rushing back with two drafts for me to sign. I signed them on the side of the carriage door and hurriedly handed them back. Was just able to see Mother and give her a wave of the hand and a cheer. Great excitement all the way down, especially at the halt. Bought some "lunch" at every halt, and threw the bottles out of the window. Arrived at Southampton about 3.30 pm and went on Board the S.S. "WINIFREDIAN", a Leyland Line Cattle East bound for Havre. Our kit bags were left at Southampton, but our equipment was taken 'tween decks, where we were supposed to sleep but we preferred remaining on deck and watching the Search Lights, Warships etc etc, until about 1030 pm. Could not see our Escort but one or two Cruisers came alongside and every vessel we passed wanted to know who we were and whether we were downhearted. Had a splendid sing-song on deck and hailed every vessel. Very calm sea and nice voyage. Turned in at 10.30 and had swarms of flies to keep us company and strange odours and heat, but the flies did not bother us because perhaps they preferred cattle. Luckily we were, al too tired to notice the abominable conditions and slept fairly well. Quartered below decks where the cattle usually herd, we herded. Made some soup on board with some hot water borrowed from the galley.

16.9.14 Arrived at Havre about 6 am. Whilst waiting to disembark Jackson and Low cut the hair of about eighteen men on the upper deck. Others conversed with two ladies on the shore as best they could with the little French they knew. The girls were very jolly and kept us highly amused. First real glimpse of Havre was the white Lighthouse at the end of the Promenade, some huge advertisements and the rouge pantaloons and blue jackets of one or two French soldiers. Was struck with the prettiness and neatness of the Town. Eventually left the ship 8.30 am and strolled about the quayside all day. Were dished out with extra ammunition. There was a little stall inside the gates and we made our first French purchases of "vin ordinaire", "du pain", "biere" etc etc and were surprised when the girl behind the bar replied in fair English!!! Did not think much of "vin rouge" or French "biere", although we had managed to get what we required, and so surging round the bar and fighting for first place, we spent the rest of the day lounging about on boxes of Claret, which we should have liked to open, indulging in all the strange "vins", Clarets, "Cidares" which were for sale. The usual Bully Beef and Biscuits were served out to us for lunch. Paraded at 5 pm. Two men of "H" Company were missing (Lassiter and Scupham) but turned up later and were put on a two weeks Fatigue, and one of them had to be present at the funeral of a German Officer, who had both legs wounded and festered through lying for two weeks in the open without attention, and who died in a British Hospital. He had a Military Funeral and a Firing Party.

Did not see much of Havre. Marched just outside the Docks to another portion of the Railway Siding, so that my impression of the town was a very vague one. We were the first troops to arrive at Le Havre for some weeks and Le Havre had just been made H.Q. for the Belgian Govt. The Goods Station and Wharf were covered in with substantial roofing – apparently new. Arrived at the Station we expected to see an ancient and well used train compartmented and cushionless, but to our surprise we found not even this - what we saw was a very long train headed by a diminutive engine made up of Cattle trucks, the outsides of which bore the Legend "40 hommes ou 8 chevaux en long". These were merely empty, high-roofed wagons, minus windows, but a large door in each side which could slide back, leaving an

opening in the centre about a third of the length. There were little apertures running the length of the sides, at the top, which could be opened about a foot or so if necessary. Some of the wagons were quite empty, but in ours, forms were placed for seating accommodation. At about 6.30 pm, after entraining horses, water carts, tool carts, and all the paraphernalia of a Regt, we were ready to move, and just before starting, Col. Malcolm made a speech to the effect that he was very sorry not to be going with "F", "G" and "H" Companies, who were going to the first Base, but he would "move earth and hell" to get the Scottish into the Firing Line as a unit. We were under the charge of Majors Torrance and Green, and the other five companies went away under Col. Malcolm and Capt. and Adj. Campbell, to "Ville Neuve" – suburb south of Paris, we to join them later on. After many false starts our tiny engine gave one of those weird head splitting shrieks that only French engines know how to, and did its best to do its duty, but the task behind was too much so she was uncoupled, and a more powerful monarch of the line took her place. Soon after, with much cheering and the singing of "The Marseillaise" for the benefit of the French Troops assembled, off we went. As many as possible sat on the floor of the wagon with our legs dangling over the side, others crowded round us – as might be guessed I secured an honoured seat, and the rest got the best view they could from the apertures. The Line went through part of the Town and we received a grand reception – people shouting out, "Vive L'Angleterre", we replying "Vive La France", Cries of "Adieu", "Au revoir", "The Marseillaise", "Tipperary", "National Anthem" etc etc being sung over and over again, and all the appropriate French greetings were shouted out. The French lassies made an awful fuss of us and it was not until it got too dark and too cold that we stopped and shut ourselves in. We then settled down as best we could for the night: trying to sleep in a cramped position was too much for most of us, and unfortunately once a position was assumed there was no room to alter it without awakening others and bringing a shower of profanity upon oneself. One or two men lay full length the forms and went through the pleasure of having their heads kicked – it was quaint to see the lamp swinging in the centre of the truck, dimly lighting up the faces of the men, and barely penetrating to the corners. I well remember the face of one man with his back propped against the end of the Wagon, sitting up with his legs resting on a form, peering into the depths of the opposite end of the truck, a smile showing his teeth and a most happy expression on his visage, as though thoroughly enjoying the novelty of the situation and quite happy spite of all his discomforts. (Private MacLean missing at Messines.) For some little time the men were silent; the truck swinging from side to side indicating we were going at a fair rate of speed, but soon we passed a Sentry guarding the line and we were instantly alert, crowding the apertures ready to cheer the next Sentry we saw. After this all idea of sleep was given up. At every station at which we halted the French soldiers and people gave us hot cafe, fruit, "pain et beurre", and cigarettes which we did not like but pretended were "fine" – and made as much fuss of us as though we were returning after great victories instead of, as we then believed, having the remotest chances of seeing the Firing Line. It was amusing to see us as soon as the train slowed down – fellows jumped off before it had stopped and rushed off to forage for refreshments, or shake the hands of a Frenchman. We were disappointed with the general appearance of the French troops, though these were probably old Reservists provided with a "fusil" which had probably seen service in 1870, and with bullets which would have made a "clean" wound as large as a 6d. in the unfortunate enemy. The dress, which we had noticed at Havre, struck us as being most incongruous, with the bright Red Pantaloon, Blue Jackets and Red Postman hats; most of them wore a long Blue Overcoat with the bottom of the front folded back each side, and buttoned to give freedom in marching. We were told afterwards that the tail could be still further folded so as to form a kind of jacket. They were very jealous of our uniform and said the Germans could see theirs miles away, whereas it was difficult for them to see the Germans or the Germans to see the British. However, they informed us the French Govt. were providing their soldiers with Khaki, with almost invisible red lines running through to remind them of the "rouge".

Our journey was one long "joy-ride" – everywhere we stopped people showered good things of this earth upon us in the form of fruit and eatables, and began to hear "cheerful stories" of what we were now to expect. The driver of our train and all the officials either did not know or were very close concerning our ultimate destination. Not an idea could we get from them, and it was not until we actually arrived at La Mans Station that we knew we had reached our journey's end.

We arrived there at about 10 am and after hanging about for an hour, standing for the most part with full kit on, and not feeling very grand after our journey, and Bully Beef and Biscuit meals, we were paraded outside. The Regulars in the Goods Yard, R.A.M.C. fellows, were very sarcastic, saying we would laugh the other side of our faces soon, and would have something to be cheerful about. We also saw French wounded returning from the Front, and got our first taste of War, and saw German Prisoners and were struck with their size, well knit appearance, and judged them to be formidable enemies who would give us a lot of trouble before we conquered them. However, both wounded and prisoners seemed to be very happy, the wounded anxious to get back again, and the prisoners only too glad to be captured. After hanging about for some little time we were marched off. Our reception through the streets of Le Mans was a very favourable one, though we could not have made much of an impression, not being allowed to sing or whistle, and bearing the effects of our journey. The route was fairly hilly and we made our first acquaintance with the abominable French cobbles. We passed through the Place de la Republique where English Transport Waggon, bearing all manner of familiar names, were standing, waggons from Manchester, Newcastle, London etc etc. and guarded by French sentries. Soon after leaving the Square we passed through the Place de la Cathedral, past the Cathedral - we were billeted in Rue Abbaye St. Vincent, a narrow winding, hilly, cobbled thoroughfare, the Convent we were in being nearly at the top of the hill, the back of which commanded a fine view of the surrounding country. There were no sewers and no drainage in the street and all rubbish was placed outside each house in the gutter "to be called for", and water was drawn from a public tap half-way down the hill - where we used to wash down to the waist to the great amusement of the inhabitants who seemed to think it quite an unnecessary proceeding. We entered the Convent by the main entrance and passed a little chapel on the right - inside the grounds - in which was billeted a Company and a half of the 1st. Devons. A little further on we arrived at a small theatre belonging to the Convent where we were halted, and which was our billet. "F" & "G" Companies occupied the body of the theatre; "H" Company, the stage. We were all herded like a lot of pigs. The floor was covered with very filthy straw and rubbish, which we soon cleared out - and had no more in whilst we were there. The removal of straw showed up huge cracks in the floor, the roof also being no better, and the stage door ill-fitting, we had an extremely cold and uncomfortable time - without blankets and without straw. ("Coronation" blankets taken from us for others - probably wounded.)

No stew that day - Bully Beef, Biscuits and Water - oh how we live!!

Leave was granted to those who wished it, ie a percentage at a time. Was too tired to desire leave, so slept instead, or rather tried to! We all lay there shivering through the night - only too glad when morning came and we were able to stretch ourselves.

Friday, 18.9.14 Reveille, 6 am. Swedish, 7 am. Breakfast, 8 am. Various fatigues for "H" & "F" Companies. "G" Company on duty.

Le Mans was the base furthest south from the Firing Line and German prisoners, French wounded, British stragglers etc etc, were all sent down here to be dealt with by special troops - we were part of these "special troops" and the Company on duty had to assist in escorting them from one base to another - we, therefore, had plenty of opportunity for seeing the gloomy side of war.

Leave was granted to 10% of us, excepting the Company on duty. All day long, parties were going to and from our H.Q. escorting prisoners, forming guards, etc.

19.9.14 Usual procedure, except "H" Company on duty. Route march in morning drill in afternoon for all except "H". Had charge of a party of men to clean out theatre and the ground round about. Men of "H" not on duty had to drill.

Prisoner escorts took three days rations and prisoners to St. Nazaire from Le Mans and to Nantes and other places. No trouble with prisoners, but the greatest difficulty in keeping the French people off them - the French would have lynched them had they the chance: as it was, they spat at, and threw rubbish at the Germans. Although only getting two hours leave per week, we managed to sneak out for drinks - going down the road to get drinking water, and happening to find ourselves in a shop nearby - somehow!!!

Wine was very cheap - a waterbottle full of cheap wine for fourpence and very good wine for about sixpence. Besides - we enjoyed trying to make the shop folk understand us.

At the foot of the hill was a French hospital and here we used to converse with the wounded - improving our French!! We also chatted with a Zouave, with his shoes, wide red bloomers, blue shirt and red fez, who had been shot in the foot by shrapnel. He treasured the piece of flattened lead which hit him and seemed very proud of himself - and most anxious to get back and have his revenge.

Took Hotson along to the dentist. 30 Rue de Port, and had several interesting conversations, trying to find the way.

Sunday, 20.9.14 Church parade in a field at the back of the convent - one of the regular Chaplains preached the sermon.

T.M. Smith. W.H. Wyllie and myself had leave from 5-7 pm, and had a very excellent time in a patisserie, where we got into conversation with a Sergt. of the 1st Gordons and a French soldier who could speak English - heard some very exciting things. The Gordon had just straggled down from the Front; nearly the whole of his regiment had been captured or "wiped out" by the enemy. The Germans prepared the ground so much that any amount of casualties were caused through sprained ankles - and they used green barbed wire, and all manner of dodges to defeat us.

The Company and half of Devons left for the Front today and we gave them a good send-off. Some of our fellows carried their packs for them, and our pipers played them to the station. During their short stay, we played two or three spirited games of football - honours even.

21.9.11 Got new boots from the Q.M.S. - had worn shoes for years so that these came very strange to me.

Had a route march - a long one with few halts: was the most hellish march I have ever done. Apart from the new boots, it was a stiff march and one of the worst the Company had done. The weather was splendid but a bit hot and the road tiring and dusty.

Some of the men came back from their duties and were full of yarns about the fighting. We begin to get quite excited!!!

It was very nice to be able to go to our main entrance and purchase cakes, 4 or 6 for "deux sous", chocolate, etc, and to speak to the various people.

We moved into the chapel in the evening; slept close up to the altar rails - one of the men slept on the altar.

22.9.14 "H" Company on duty. Campbell. Dick, Willis, Shepherd and several others sent up to the line with stragglers. The whole of us - excepting one or two N.C.O.s - on duty.

Much warmer in the chapel and we slept much better. Had been told off to be in charge of Station Guard, but Lnce. Corporal Matchan was substituted as he had had the job before and knew the ropes. Took charge of wagon party to draw stores from the Station. Offended Major Torrance and he compelled us to walk behind the wagon instead of having a "joy-ride". However we stopped at a Cafe on our way back and had some cafe-au-lait avec cognac in nice long thin glasses. About 12.30 am a party was asked for some special purpose and I did not volunteer as I was already told off for some duty. Very disappointed but my feet were so bad it would have been no use. Bryden sold me a comfortable pair of shoes for 4/2d. W.A. Forrest brought my boots for 5/0d. (Cost me 11/-).

23.9.14 Very pleasant route march; shoes made a big difference. However, had to get my heel dressed, it was so bad. In the evening we had a "false alarm" and left Le Mans at 7.30 pm for another destination. Had a magnificent "send-off", far better than the welcome. Seemed as though they were glad to see the last of us, but that was not so judging by the way they carried on when we came back. They went "mad" over the pipes. The cobbled roads gave my heel an awful doing, and the standing about in full marching order on the Station platform made me feel rather sick, Sergt. Emslie was also in a bad way. A train of wounded "Tommies" was opposite and they told us their experiences. One man showed us a lump of black iron which had been taken out of his back – shrapnel – luckily not hurting him seriously. However, we received the order to march back to our billets and passing under the archway sang, "Here we are again". Did not relish the "agony" march back. The people took us to be fresh troops and gave us a rousing reception. Slept in equipment ready to start at any time. Parcels were awaiting us, which we did justice to though I was not one of the lucky ones.

24.9.14 Made a real start. Left Le Mans 10.15 am. Arrived Station 11 am. This time we were put in 3rd Class Corridor carriages - not so dusty!! Would compare favourably with some of our worst English coaches. There were only seven men in one compartment. No one was allowed out unless with permission, and an armed guard with Fixed Bayonets, as though we were criminals, hopped out at every halt, and marched up and down the platform. Oh! the withering sarcasm we poured upon the head of the unfortunate guard, so much so, that it was withdrawn!!! Very decent run, though not so noisy and exciting as the last, and we arrived at Ville Neuve after passing Paris, and watching the Searchlights searching the skies for aircraft at 10.30 pm. Here, "F" Company alighted, "G" and "H", after a two hours wait, in the train, went off further south at 12.20 am. We arrived outside Orleans Station 7 am and spent all day in the train. Had a ride on a French engine made by the Baldwin Low Wks. Philadelphia, but had to cut it short as we heard the "Fall-in". We were able to buy wine and food at the town, and had a good time. Had to act as policeman part of the day and keep men off the line. Bad heel a nuisance as it stopped my getting to town. The train was shunted to a siding at Malingy, where slept for the night, arriving there about 1.30 am. It was a cold frosty morning – exceedingly cold – and I shall never forget the volume of language Mr McAllister and Dick Collins used when they were wanted on guard by the Colour Sergt.!!!!!!! It was good !!!!! Sleeping in the train was very difficult, even though only five in the carriage. The two men on the floor were alright and the man on the opposite side and the Colour Sergt. On the opposite end of my seat, but I was so cramped up, not having enough room to stretch out lengthways, and unable to place my feet on the opposite cushions, or place them on the floor, for fear of kicking the men there, that I spent a wretched night and was only too glad when the time came to get up. After the usual toilet we repaired to the Station a few hundred yards further along, and bought some very decent vin rouge. Others, more fortunate, arranged little lunches at some other private houses, varying from new bread and butter to cutlets and pomme-de-terre, which was a very welcome change to Bully Beef, Biscuits and Water. A group of us walked along the line. It was a fine sunny morning. One of our men, a Canadian who had joined up for the war wore a glengarry of his cordation Regt. it was decorated with a white background and red checks. As we met some French railway men, he pointed to the sky and said "Bong matin fine day ain't it". "Oui Monsieur" came the reply "Bon soleil". Everyone laughed and he was dubbed "Bong Matin" thereafter. It was a gloriously hot morning and I spent it lounging about the banks writing letters. "Golly" arranged a Football match, but the players soon had enough of it. It was far too hot for that. However, in the midst of it all, "Fall In" went, and we were shunted back to

Orleans, to the Goods Siding, where we were employed in unloading hay from wagons. Here Jackson leaned against the open doorway of a cattle truck, with some others watched by a group of Railway employees - he pointed to his chest and said "Moi! Le troisieme fils d'Lord Kitchenaire!" then waited for the admiration which duly came - Frenchmen beckoning their friends to see the great man. A wiser man than the rest spat, then replied, "Lord Kitchenaire n'pas marie" and the crowd quickly and disgustingly dispersed. We set to with a will and shifted that hay in no time. During the performance I was sent in charge of a party - 20 or more - to get drinking water, to a large French Camp. One of the men in charge persisted in buying vin rouge for us, and making us fill our water bottles and loading us all with "pain". They were all overflowing in their admiration for us, but later on we vowed them a nuisance hanging round asking questions and begging souvenirs, for we were destined to see a good deal of these troops. Towards dusk, we were paraded and marched along the street to the centre of Orleans. The usual cobbled thoroughfares and the usual excited crowd catching our tunes, and screaming with delight at our "Whoo's", which are a part of some of our noisy songs, for we were very lighthearted and did our best to please. After a march of about a couple of miles or so, we arrived at the Alhambra, a Cinema Theatre, which was to be our Billet for some days. Here, we were to await the arrival of Indian Troops from Marseilles, and attend to their wants and so it was rumoured, fight with them. We expected the usual rest and Church Parade today.

27.9.14 Various Fatigue Parties were formed, and marched away at different times for various duties.

Reveille 7 am and paraded 7.15 am and marched with a Party to Orleans Station, where we met a train of wagons with heavy guns - 4.7/s, and transport carts, etc and helped unload them. They belonged to an Indian Contingent of the R.G.A and R.F.A. and we were struck with the magnificent physique of the men. They could not be bettered by the pick of the Prussian Guards.