

I had some weeks in Douai. I don't remember. I was about a fortnight in Douai, then we went to a hospital in Mons - by train - and then a fortnight or so afterwards - we went right across Germany to a place called Stargard. In Mons we were with the German wounded - you got the same treatment as they did. Until you got back into the big hospitals and they separated you from the Germans - you got the same tucker as they did. They had no bally linen bandages you know. They had some sort of crepe paper and they could unwind it - they just used to pick it off in handfuls in the morning. They had damn little anaesthetics - I got out just before Christmas out of Stargard - that's nearly 8 months I had nearly in hospital - I don't remember much about Mons - we were never out of the hospital - I was pretty nearly a bed-case there - I don't remember much about that - it was day after day - I think I was a couple of days - in a second class carriage - 8 men in a compartment. Of course, then - I'm feeling fairly well you know - still you'd get a coughing fit - the lung was evidently ruptured - and it would start bleeding again - I'd be feeling pretty crook for a day or two - coughing up blood. It was a - the first week I was damn crook - I hardly knew whether I was alive or dead. But there were worse cases than I was - I saw some terrible cases from bloody shell explosions - the whole body was shaking - nerves gone - and bruises! Goddamn it - practically the whole body was blue - and not a hit on them - not a metal hit. The concussion from the shells was terrific. It was there - in a hospital - it had evidently been built for war purposes - it was a big new hospital - at Stargard 4 or 5 stories high - it was looking over - we were on the East ward of it - looking over what had once been a pine forest - and we had Russian prisoners for doctors - been taken prisoner on the Eastern Front early, and one of them said to me "They took 3 million prisoners of ours", he said, "There's a million dead, there's a million in hospital dying, and there's a million out still working". See the Germans - they were bastards to prisoners in the First World War - but they seemed to rather like the British - whether they were afraid of them, or not, I don't think so. But we got the best treatment. The French there - they didn't like - but the British got the best treatment of any. Some time during the stay there the Swiss Red Cross came through the hospital and sought out your name and army and everything else and sent it through the Red Cross to Britain - that's how your name got to Britain - that you were still a prisoner - well, that must have been (late in 1917) I know I got no Red Cross parcels until I was back in the camp in Hestinmoor about Christmas or a little after Christmas - I think Schneidemuhl was the lager I went to when I was kicked out of hospital - you were turned out - you were there for a while until there was a job going and then they would send you out. I, as a Corporal, didn't have to go to work. There were no 4th Brigade men with me at Stargard at all. See what had evidently happened - after leaving Douai - Mons was a collecting place for all prisoners- we were mostly British - there were a couple of Australians - but not ours - they were mostly British, Australians, and Canadians that were at Stargard. The big main camps were bastards - very poorly fed, because - once you got into the main stream onto the working parties - the life was a dog's life. You were put on army rations - which was mostly stickruben - which they called it - which is a turnip - and a black bean meal - that was the soup - sometimes you'd get cabbage. It was nothing else than a vegetable soup in the first place - there'd be no meat in it - because they were heavily rationed. The soup was mostly cabbage - and this stickruben as they called - evidently a turnip - and a bean - which I think was imported from down Roumania and those places - it was almost like a blackberry - your lap would go into sick of it(?) - it was terrible - and spuds. You'd get a good lot of spuds - they were the only decent thing you really got to eat out of the lot of it. Sometimes you'd get a meal nearly all spuds - they were quite nice and edible - (from narrative - and acorn coffee - which was like Bourke river water).

The men who wouldn't share the food in Schneidemuhl - they were British - the Old Sweats - they were British - now when they get a lot of prisoners in the camp - the

British amongst themselves would form a committee nearly of all the British NCOs - and they were bastards of men. Of course, I must have been the only NCO in this part of the "sickies" who went to Schneidemuhl from Stargard - there were about 30 of us, I think. They'd come through and put a bundle to get- and send you off to the work camp. When you'd get there of course, you'd be allotted to your camp - which was a big old wooden barracks and in there would be - if it was English - they'd have an English - they'd be separated - they'd have a little cabin to themselves at the end - and they'd be boss of that barrack - probably a couple of hundred men, and they would form a committee to handle this - there was - the British Red Cross used to have a store in the camp - oh, a couple of tons of biscuits and things - and when we got to hear of it, we went and asked - I and one other - an Englishman, we went and asked them if we could have some of it. They gave us a little - very sparingly - they got some out and gave it to us, but there were tons in there - and we were only getting a few ounces. I told the lads, "Look, we'll get up and brash (?) these fellows and ask them for a bit of a cut of the stuff". We were on German rations, and sick men like we were - you'd never get well on it - and By God, they didn't to want to hand any over at all. Then I asked for the name and regiment of the wholly bloody lot - I said, "I'll put you bastards through the Red Cross" - of course, they would control the outgoing mail - so I wouldn't get a letter out - ah! British

21

NCOs - of course, one birds said - there were a few Australians - they must have been captured up at Fromelles - the first battle they fought in France - that was the 5th Divvy - again they made a mauling of them. (In the book - I called it Operation Full-Belly)

Re Fromelles: That was near Armentieres - Bailleul and up in Northern France, and they used to go in there to sort of get used to trench warfare - it was a sort of bally training ground for them - and then go on down to the Somme. Sometimes we did raid while we were there - and then go down to the Somme. But the 5th Divvy went in and they put this big stunt on - Divisional stunt. It was only a raid too - but totally inexperienced men - and they gave them this damn job - and it was a horrible muck-up. They had hellish casualties and nothing gained. See the British had 4 or 5 armies there around the Somme, and they all had their own press reporter - and to keep there name - the Generals - to keep their name in front of the public this press reporter would stage a - if there was a raid on - he'd stage it as a great battle - there were more stupid things done.

I had a tan pair of Australian army boots - and in my book I said that in November 1917 I got my first Red Cross parcels - 8 of them - two months in arrears. The boot affair was during one of the attempts - I tried to bribe the guard with a pair of boots - he didn't take them, and roused me bally war bag, and of course the boots went then - and money went too. There was paper money in it and they took a lot of it. My first attempt - from Schneidemuhl - just about Christmas time - they called up - it must have been about 2 or 3 hundred British NCOs and they sent us right back across Germany to a small special lager for British NCOs - Hestinmoor. I was in it quite a while, and there my bally Red Cross parcels caught up with me, and in no time at all I'm on the mend. And it was then I thought, oh damnit - I said to a mate - we'll leave, eh. We'll be tourists over Germany! We'll have a go - no, it was the second time, I remember now - it was a poor attempt - it wasn't as good as the first - no, we had a good run right to the River Ems the first one. It was the second one, now was from a little village - we'd got on a farm - the girl was the boss there on the farm - there was an Englishman, a Roumanian, a Scotsman and I - we were the working wood - we were cutting pine pit props. I said, "Look, we'll have a go". We were in a little cottage

with only a couple of bars - with one two three steel bars only just screwed into the wood - so I got hold of a screwdriver somewhere

END OF TAPE TWO

The only thing is - a couple at daytime see - I think it was Westphalia we were in - we were 270 kilometres, and we had a couple or three or four big rivers to cross, and it was crossing one of those bridges - it was the first trip I had the best run ever. (I got a farm job north of Soltau). Now in the camp what you did was this - as an NCO you did not work, but you could volunteer to get a job - but only on a farm would you work - and of course, on your bally sheet you see, as an Arbeitsman - you're down as a farmer, and you'd see if anybody would have you, and they'd send you out. Well what happened then - most of the big German lagers had got into the hands of Belgian officers - see taken early in the piece - they had become the confidantes of the bloody Germans - and got bally control over the camp. I know there were about 3 or 4 rivers to cross -

I was on one of the Westphalia farms - we were on the road 10 days the first time - the second time we might have been on it 4 or 5 days - but we seemed to make slow progress - rivers are the main trouble - another things is - roads - you had a compass and you would use it - I had cooking grain for burgoo - the problems were with the farm dogs - the dogs were always the problem, because you'd go hunting around the farms of a night time to see if you could find grain or spuds to cook up during the day - now Germany - especially over on that side nearly every farm has got a forest in it - and it was in those little forests that you would hide all day. You scratched the pine needles away from the stump of a tree and the bottom underneath would be dry and you could get a fire going with very little smoke - but the dogs - often following the men to work - would smell you - and that was the trouble with the dogs. But at night-time if you were in farming country - the towns were mostly - you could go through the towns with safety - and the villages - any time after 12 o'clock - sometimes there'd be an odd light in it - but the towns weren't lit and you could go through with safety - quite easy. But the bridges - nearly all were lit! And it was on one of these - I think our destination that night was a town named - we were travelling south of a big town - a city - named Verdun - we'd had a map, but we were only carrying a drawing of it that we'd made ourselves. Of course that's all you wanted - your main railways, the main rivers, and roads. Naturally the bulk of the road were heading south - mostly south-west - some - very few - were really heading for Holland - where we wanted to go. So we had - often - we'd follow them for a mile or two until we'd find a diverging road that would be heading west, and you were zig-zagging over a lot of country and you were not making much progress. I found that two or three times. We didn't have a very good map, although there were some very good maps held by the prisoners - they had come in the food parcels to the British prisoners with just that purpose - they'd be hidden in the back of a hair brush or boot brush or something like that. The Red Cross wouldn't know - nor would the Germans - but I know once they grabbed you that was the first thing they looked for - wirecutters and maps were the first thing they looked for. You always had a compass - you could buy those in the shop - no trouble at all - you could buy that in any German shop. As I say - the roads were all heading south-west, and although it wouldn't be a circle, we must have gone 100 mile out of our way. We came upon a hunting lodge in a big forest - I don't know whether I mentioned the Zep. ground - we passed a big Zep. ground there - one day and night - an aerodrome - they had a very big airship there - a very big one - and these things - in fact, we camped within a mile of it - in a forest. We could see the whole of the proceedings all day, but there would have been anything up to six or seven sheds all with Zeps in them. At night time they would be well lit up and depart - and you'd see the return - of course you didn't know where they were going or what. We'd only been on the road about six or seven days at that time - and yet our (?) - I

know by our map we had 270 miles (?) to go, and I don't reckon we'd covered in a straight line 70 miles - well that's only 10 miles a night, and if you wanted to do any good, you'd want to do anything up to 30 to 40 - like of a night - because the nights were long there you know. But a river would stop you. I searched those bally rivers there - I forget their names - there were two of the very big main rivers (Aller) - the main risk was the bridges - the bridges were always lit, and especially the bally railway bridges - they were all lit. I've searched the banks of two or three of those rivers - there were two rivers there - they came together somewhere there on our map - I've just forgotten what the town would be at the junction - but there was a lot of traffic on it day and night - but to get across those damn bridges you had to be lucky - so I searched mile after mile of those banks looking for a boat - but I reckoned these damn Germans must be dishonest - every boat that was available was locked! That's why I used to go searching among the farms - for a spike that would draw the staple out - and then the dogs would be a nuisance - they would be on top of you in no time at all. The river I got to on the first time was covered with ice. That was in January 1918 - I remember that one well. We got to the Ems - it would be late January by the time we got there - and there's a bridge across - that's what we were after - I think it was a railway bridge - it was lit of course - and I said, "We'll have a go at the bridge". We went up and laid on the embankment - there was no guard on it - no damn guard at all. But about half a mile up there was - it appeared to be shallower water - and a sand spit ran nearly half way out into the river - I said, "This damn bally river must be shallow - we might be able to walk across it - we'll put our rucksack on our back and walk over it". We went into - but it dropped into deep water almost immediately - we were up to our necks - and by God it was cold - there were sheets of ice like big platters floating down with the current. I said "We'll never make this Bill", so we turned back. It was one of the best camps ever I had - and in Germany - up against the abutment of the bridge. It had been all cemented of course - the bridge was 15 23 or 20 feet over us. Someone had been there and made a camp up against the embankment, and there were suckers of some sort and grown up through to the sky (?) but this little recess was as dry as a bone. Of course, we were as wet as shags - cold. January. We always carried a complete change with us - boots and all. We took them off and got into dry clothes and there was a lot of bally driftwood there against the timber (of the bridge) and we lit a fire. And we stayed there two days - or a day and a half anyway - and the second night - there usually is a fog of a morning in Germany about that time in Germany - we were only a few miles from Holland. That was one of the best two days (I spent in Germany). We waited until 2 or 3 o'clock that night, and went up onto the earth abutment of the bridge, and laid there for nearly an hour - we thought that at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning there would be no traffic and no coming. Well we crossed the bridge at a trot, and we were on the verge of the road about barely a quarter of a mile from the bridge and we ran slap-bang into two policemen on push-bikes - Goddamn it! No lights of course - if they'd had lights we'd have been sweet, and gone. They pinched the boots of course - they took me back to the nearest town - I don't know what. They told us that they were on the watch - not for us - but for their own young men escaping into Holland to dodge the war - because that was fairly late in it you know. This was January or February 1918. We had a very poor understanding of German, and what they said didn't mean much to us. He'd got a great cartridge and waved it in front of me - we knew what that meant - if we tried to run we'd be shot. But when I - I dropped me bally bag and brought out a pair of new tan boots. My God, he thought, - we were known as "Vicloafers" - (from weglaufen) - absconding from work - how I came to know it so well, you had your own German paper and stamped right across it in big big letters was VICLOAFER - it means an absconder from labour. After you were captured they put you in a local clink, and you would be sent back to the lager which you belonged to - that is, the big lager - Soltau. Two attempts were from Soltau - in fact the whole three attempts were from Soltau - it would control probably a million bally prisoners of

war. (In the book - from the clink I went to Emden and then Osnabruck). They'd keep you in the local clink until a guard was available - generally a guard would come from Soltau to pick you up and take you back. You'd stop - like railways are pretty close together in Germany - he would stop at every rail junction and you'd make a change to get back to Soltau. See the main lines appeared to be all running into France - but there were a lot of - at Osnabruck I met Germans from America- I think that was the first big gaol I went into - but it was only on the way back to Soltau. This place - now Osnabruck is well over - I don't remember why I came to mention it - Osnabruck is pretty well over into western Germany - In gaol - I met an English speaking German - he was an NCO, and he and I had quite a good yarn over war and different things - he'd been in America a good while this young man - he was a Feldwebel as they called them - the sergeant - he was almost an officer in the German army - a Feldwebel. He knew they were beaten then - he said "We're beaten" - see this was 1918 and the Yanks were in and they were hunting them back on the Western Front - the Germans were retreating although they were still fighting very hard. When I got back to Soltau I had to face the commandant I had to face the commandant, and I got 21 days in the cells. You always got that - every time you got out - you got that for sure. I did three terms - except the last time - when we bluffed the old guard that the war was over - Iron Bill. I said, at breakfast they'd open the cell - and bring you a hot drink of coffee and something to eat - have your bed rolled - they would give you two or three blankets of a night - and a mattress - have your bed rolled and as soon as he opens the door throw it into the middle of the corridor - oh look the war's over - we're not going to stay in gaol - he ran away and saw the old commandant - and he thought for a while - and he said - oh, yes, let them go - back to your lager.

The first time I tried to recite some poetry - you couldn't sleep you know - a wooden floor - and after about midnight I'd get up and start roaring some song and stamped the floor - they put up with it for a while - and then they'd come raging to the door - "Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!" But you'd doing anything to torment the bastards. I could remember these school poems like Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson - I'd read and memorised quite a few of those then - in my younger days I spent a couple of years out in the west on a sheep station and you'd learn them out there. When I enlisted - there'd been a disaster down home - a divorce - we were then living on the Wheeler estate. Grandad was an Englishman who had come to Australia in the 1830's and got some very big land grants about Manley and Narrabeen - he owned a lot of properties there - I was born at Narrabeen And during the big drought we brought cattle from out of the west down onto the homestead as we knew it - 7 miles from Manley - on the head of the lakes - there wasn't much grass but there were bulrushes and bracken fern, and the cattle lived on it for two years, and we went ahead and we had 2,000 head to take back, and a disaster - oh Dad played up and got a new girl - and Mum divorced him. And Mum got badly treated with the divorce - he pleaded poverty and she got nothing much - and she married again - she took on a boarding house - up in the Blue Mountains and was there for a few years. But I went out onto a sheep station from 17 to 19. At nineteen I came to Queensland - I cut cane and so on around Mackay and all there for those five years in Queensland before the war. I was cutting cane for 5 years around Mackay during the seasons - there's about 5 or 6 months season you see - oh it was good money - a pound a day - that was good work - and oh, it's not so hard work - the loading was a bit tough. But that cane knife it light - then the war came. When we - sometime in the early 20's Mother and the girls - there were 4 girls - came to Queensland - and we were ballotting then - there was a system for ballotting for land in Queensland - and during the war I was overseas when they actually drew Corrie - 1916 - and when I came back they still had this block of land. And I went straight onto it - it was good country, but the gods forget to rain - it was a drought stricken bloody place. And I spent too much money on it - we didn't have much money of course - we didn't have much

money of course - or Mum didn't - I had a few hundred saved from the war. But on top of us came a 14 year drought for a start - that's what bugged it - and then from 35 till about 57 I had a run of good years, and I built Corrie up into a very fine property - spent a fortune on a dog-netting fence - the dingos were bad in it. That was the trouble - I borrowed money to build it - I reckoned I'd never see another poor day. It didn't break us - I saved about 40,000 out of the wreck when I came off it - and some nephews some other help to buy a farm....

Bill Graham - I had three different mates - Bill Graham and Bill Gilhooley aren't the same men (see narrative). I've just forgotten how the escapes ran - one was really an Englishman - I think the first one was a bloody Englishman - (more probably Graham) - I went to this first camp with all the intention of going - but when it came to it - this is January - when we got on the job - there were two Englishmen, a Scotsman, and a Roumanian. He was put in - he was nothing to do with us but they wanted 5 on the work job, so they sent him as a workmate - he was a nice lad anyway. But when it came to the showdown the boys didn't like facing it. Our boys - only one of them went with me - yes, three different men - Bill Graham he was the last one - that was horrible bally luck that, you know. We only had about 70 miles to go the Ems, and I'd done my second time in clink and come out - I didn't know Bill very well then - I had met him. And he said, "When are you thinking of going again Jim?" "Oh", I said, "Not for a while yet! I've just done 21 lean days on bread and water - and I said, "Not for a while Bill!" He said, "I'd like to go with you". I said, "Alright - we'll have a crack at it". I said, "You know the procedure?" Also he - a piano-tuner - now he had been working in the city of Soltau - just near the camp for the Germans - anyway - now the camps were run by Belgians - and they were open to bribes - the bribe was a tin of beef or some other tin stuff -- Holy smokes - they were in the Work Department - so he'd go to them and say "Get us a job on a farm, and the furthest west you can get it". That's how we got 311 OL ~hem. Of course, before we weren't very lucky, but we got an opportunity- just to get out and onto a farm so we took it. But the last one was a beauty - because it was only 70 miles to go. When we got there it was evidently an estate - an old German married to an Englishwoman - had a son and daughter still in England. He must have had about 40 people working on the farm - there were 20 or 30 Belgian girls working there - we never got to see much of them - in fact we hardly got our footing at all - we were given a job - there were 14 Russians there and it was a wood job again - cutting pit props - into the bloody fields cutting pit props for the mines - and they would then - you then had to wait for a certain time until you got your food parcels, before you could go. You didn't - like your rations - your German tucker, was only a bare existence - even on that good farm it was pretty poor - damn poor. But we had nothing there - in the camp - because I was as bare as a bally what's-a-name - and Bill had saved nothing from his parcels - he'd been in camp a long while - but I told him that - we'll have to sit down for at least a fortnight or a month and collect four or five parcels - you had to have at least a week's tucker to go. Even the distance - you didn't know - see that River Ems was always the trouble - they would bally well check your parcels to see that you didn't get much of a store by - but some were fairly lenient - you could - some would even open your tinned stuff and have a look at it - but it never came to that - we'd hardly been three or four days when the guard - the Polzen (?) as they call him - came there raging - and he said - that's the first time I saw this paper - waving this paper with VICLOAFER on it - oh, back to the camp! It appears they wanted Bill - it wasn't me they really wanted - but as mates we'd go. Some of them would have come into the lager looking for a piano-tuner - so the old commandant said "Yes - right" and they went looking for Bill and he's not there! He'd sent him out on an Arbeitscommando. Oh the old commandant went to market - "Bring him in immediately! Bring him in!" And that's how we came to - they got word out to this guard and we were on the train back to the lager in no time. It was the best

chance we ever had and we never got a go. By now I was an old campaigner, by now. I was captured near a camp of conscientious objectors - I think it must have been Soltau - there was a big camp there - they were telling us they were getting a rougher deal than we were - and that's the story - the commandant said "oh these men fought for their country - you wouldn't, so you can take what's given to you". Yes it was a big camp - though I think a lot of them were Jews - the Germans disliked the Jews even then.

In Egypt I was out at Lake Timsah for a time - now after the first wound - I think it was late August or early September when I got to Britain - and I had 3 or 4 months in hospital in England - then they gave you a fortnight's leave - and then in no time at all you were on a boat going back - they were short of men then you know. It would be late December - they put us aboard the big Olympic on the Mersey - at Liverpool - she had 10,000 troops aboard her - reinforcements going to Cape Helles and Suvla - all British. About 200 Australians and New Zealanders aboard - when we got back to Mudros - it must have been very late to evacuation time, because we were put ashore - we were put in a detail camp on Lemnos Island - we had Christmas there I remember, that was the Billy year - each soldier aboard got the billies. After coming off Lemnos we were put in a detail camp in Egypt - we were put ashore from Alexandria - a detail camp near Cairo - Gazerra - and a few weeks later we shifted down to a place called Moascar, which is down near the Suez. And Moascar was very close to that old battlefield of Tel-el-Kebir. We were there for a while, and we were put in that ungodly march from Tel-el-Kebir to Serapeum - but I missed the march - I was sent with a baggage guard and missed it. Oh, it was a stupid march - it started over an argument in the officer's mess over whether the present day troops were as good as the old British troops, I believe. Getting to Serapeum, there was a pontoon bridge over the Canal and then we were out in the Sinai Desert. There must have been anything up to a quarter of a million men camped there - there were two camps the Serapeum and Cantara (?) and another one right up north. Well that Cantara - which was north of a little town called Ismailia - they were building a railway - there was a pontoon bridge that carried a railway across and out into the desert - at Serapeum we were building a 4" pipeline - a water line, a road, and what we know as a tram line - we were out 8 mile - our division, but that was where the reconstruction of the AIF took place - the reinforcements they had been sending - see there were then in Egypt two full divisions and two spare brigades - they had enough men to beef out these two divisions and create two divisions from the two brigades - there were then four divisions of Australians in Egypt. Again we were lucky - as a veteran corps we were given the task of patrolling the Suez Canal, and we were scattered along it in small detachments - A Company was right up north - Number One Section of A Company - they turned us into the bombers, you see we camped - now Lake Timsah - that town Ismailia is on it - and we were camped there - it was a beautiful job - you could fish - we used to use Mills bombs and other explosives - for fishing - you wouldn't catch them by line- there was shipping going through - a lot would go through - they would throw things over - one day I collected a cooked chook, cigarettes wrapped up in paper to keep it dry - papers and magazines and God know what the passengers - they just threw them over into the Canal - they'd get wet - but they would soon dry - some of them had greaseproof paper over them - the cooked chook was done up in what was a piece of heavy brown paper that had been put in the fat tin - and evidently put in the oven - and it was as good as gold - it came out as good as gold. (In narrative - you might get a week old Bombay paper). The ships would come through pretty frequently too, and the passengers of course - the whole 90 miles of it was - except for the three or four lakes - when you'd be out of sight of the ship of course - Timsah is not a very big lake - but there was an old French battleship - it was in Lake Timsah and was guarding it - and in the other lakes there were old British battleships that were afraid to go to sea -

but still if they fired a shot they'd fire well out into the desert - and then patrolling it every day they had those motor torpedo boats - one time there - our battalion was at a place called Tussoom, and we were spread along it in little detachments for about 3 or 4 miles - and we were the nearest to Ismailia, but there were a flotilla of these bally motor boats used to run through every day - and you'd see the wake of these boats - the pace of these boats - going down and then coming sweeping back - one - two - three - four - five - six of them. There was a bally - into these camps used to come traders - Peter the Wandering Jew - they were sellers of anything - you could order a case of grog - you could get lager there - and he would bring it out for you and one day - we had a nice bow shed (?) - oh, rushes it was made of - and our tents up - and he brought us out this beer - and of course the lads were into it straight away - it was hot of course. So we put half a dozen in the deep water of the Canal, to let them cool - the water down below was fairly cool you see. So we put them there - as far as you could get your arm in - when six of these boats came through- one - two - three - four - five - six. And it wasn't long before one of the lads said, "I wonder how our beer is"- and goddamn it - there's a rush for the water - and these six bottles - we only ever got two of them the sloping sandbank - it's all sand, you know - all sand - drifting sand too - evidently the wash of these gunboats and wheeled the bottles out into 30 or 40 feet of water - we never got them. Peter the Wandering Jew was just like the ordinary Arab - he generally wore a lot of jewellery on him, and was pretty always well dressed - he had a donkey column to carry this stuff - you could buy chocolate, biscuits, or anything from them - tinned fruit - the chocolate would keep - he could carry a good range of edibles - tinned stuff - it was mostly sweets you craved in the army. You got little but that damn jam - tinned fruit was a thing that mostly you sought - but the beer - there's still four bottles of it still there. On Anzac Day - we were then in camp - hadn't gone on this patrol - what we used to do on this patrol was a camel and a long piece of softwood - looked about 8 by 2 with about 8 or 10 feet of sacking nailed onto it - and he used to drag this behind him and he left a swept track - and that used to be examined every morning - they knew there was news going out from Egypt into the desert to the Turks, you see - and they wanted to see if they could catch him, or find any trace of them. That was the idea of the swept track. We were then - we hadn't got onto the patrol - we were a few weeks there in camp - Anzac Day they gave us a holiday - and a damn good dinner and a bottle of beer a man. Teddy Windsor was visiting

the army you see - and Cox the general in charge, invited him for Anzac Day dinner - and he got a lot of grog out of course - of course, there'd be a big lot of officers present, you know - probably 100 officers present so there was sure to be a lot - Scotch and this sort of stuff. So there was a team from our battalion had evidently seen some of it arrive and got to know where it was kept - in the store-tent - but the raid must have been by some hundreds because they practically cleaned it out of all bally spirits - as far as I know - there was a case came to our battalion and to our company - there were five men in a tent very close to me that I know - I got a drink one night - it was all dug into the floor of the tent! Anyway, one day they called a parade - it was after dinner - evidently we were going to do a march or a bit of drill - and a big chap named Burns - no, it was E. Simon - he was not an officer then - he got a commission later - he called out - Burns. It was pretty our certain our boys must have got a good lot of it - but none of it was ever found. But that was the only give-away that the 15th were involved - this bird - it was weeks afterwards! Burns was drunk on the floor of the tent. He was on his hands and knees trying to get up! Eric Simon - I knew him well - he was sergeant from the word go on the Peninsula and finished up with a Commission - he went right through the damn war - and he broke his neck down near Nerang diving into the river. Eric Simon - a nice young lad - very young. I knew him well - he was a lucky man - he went through some very big stunts - how he came to get on so well in the army - he'd been a cadet or officer in that

compulsory service - that's why he got his stripes - it was compulsory service for all young men - it came in about 1912 - you had two years run before the war broke out - (substitute it had for you had). He and Robby - they were two nice lads - he was Corporal - he was in the battalion orderly office - he got a commission too - Robertson (?) (should be Robinson ?) - There were two other nice boys - they were killed on the Peninsula - they should have been in bally school instead of where they were - Kollenbucker (?) - two bloody nice kids - of course we got a hell of a mauling in that August stunt - I was lucky I got hit early in the piece - and got carried out of it back - and got away. A lot of the poor beggars laid there for nearly a month before they got away - oh it was British bloody organisation - old Bill - GOC Wounded - he was a real brainless old idiot - no hospital ships - two hospital ships and there's 100,000 men going into action - by the weekend - I think it started on a Friday - and over the weekend there were 12,000 casualties - and all he had were two hospital ships to handle it. It was the same at the Landing - there were hundreds of men who died on that beach for want of attention. Red Ned from Nanagindie - re: beer - the Australians were all thieves. We had two Red Neds in the battalion - red-haired you see. I could have mentioned quite a few more - Tas. Shannon he was another - and little Jolly Carter - I should have given him a mention - he was an officer - those men were young - too young to be - the only reason they got commissions were because they had done two years of this army service - all the rest of the lads had been completely untrained as soldiers. I didn't swim in the Anzac Day Sports - although I was a damn good swimmer - but I got down and just looked on - we walked down to it - it was a day's holiday - but we didn't appreciate it greatly anyway - because the beer was damned hot when we got it - it wasn't cool - the dinner was quite a good one - a good bally English roast - no chook - and roast vegetables - it was rare you got a roast in the army, you know - they must have had special ovens brought in to do it because the average cooker would only give one company a roast - and the others would all get stew - it was quite well cooked too - vegies - two or three varieties - only a roast - no chook - roast beef. But I didn't go into the sports, but practically the whole of the Australian army must have been spread along those banks. I don't think we expected to go back to Gallipoli - we were pretty well certain that it would be France when we went back to Egypt - they didn't leave us in doubt long. The 1st Divvy must have gone nearly in March I think - we didn't go till the last - and there was still a big lot of troops left behind - a lot of them were practically undesirables - I know that I got one job - as a guard on a bally trainload of undesirables - that was before I came down and joined the army - that was from Cairo to Port Suez - that must have been very early in the piece because they were put aboard the old Kiaora (?) - she had brought us over - and later she was turned into a hospital ship - but if you were three times - if you missed - you were sent home. These men were being sent home. Three times drunk and you were sent home. Some of those lads who were in the battle of the Wazzer - I wasn't in it - it was a bit before my time - and they burnt - it was the red light district of Cairo - and the story is that a New Zealander was killed in one of the houses of ill-fame, as they called it his body stripped and mutilated and thrown into the street. That was the first story - nobody ever saw the body - but whatever the reason the word came to all camps - "Next payday all troops were to be in Cairo" - but I was in camp, but a lot of us never went anyway - but a lot of them got that full - a lot of them got full and got home - some of them had to walk home because it was late and the trams had stopped running - but some of them were that full that they stayed behind and got caught. Well they were court-martialled - that British Army on active service - shoot - by firing squad, but it was a Labour government in power, and they remembered that affair of Breaker Morant and Hancock - and they brought it in in Parliament - and passed it - no death penalty for Australian troops on active service. And the Englishmen were very cut about it - of course, not being able to shoot these men. They tried to get the Australian government to alter it - no, they stood firm - but they

gave them a life-sentence and they were sent home - they let them go a lot of them after they got home - and there were two of them arrived back in our battalion in April 1917 and both got killed at Bullecourt - I didn't know their names - I didn't know them at all well, but that's what happened.

On the Peninsula, the landing made at Cape Helles - had 21 - they wanted the narrows you see, to stop those guns, to let the British ships go through - Gallipoli is only 40 odd miles long - 12 at the widest - and they wanted - they landed - the 29 Division - made a complete muck of it - and the narrows are 20 miles away. Anyway, some time in May - things were quiet at Anzac - so they asked Birdwood to lend them a brigade of men to go to bally Helles and he sent the 2nd Brigade - a Victorian brigade - he gets down there and this boss of the 29 Division he says to Mackay - did you bring any bands with you? No said, Mackay - Did you bring any Colours - that's flags? No, he said. By this time there had been 3 battles each with 3,000 casualties - and he's talking about leading the next one with a band - my God!

The reason they failed was this - and it was the same right through the war - the bloody frontal attacks ~ prepared frontal attacks - poor artillery- and the naval guns were the same - they had practically no barrage at all - that's why the heavy casualties were caused. When the men came out from Pozieres - the first time round - we relieved the 2nd Division - and we saw some of them coming out - and if ever you saw a team of men - they'd been in - it was the first time we'd had the taste of German artillery fire - and my God those men - they looked shocking - you only did about four nights and four days in - you generally got an attack - we failed the first one - failed in both of them. I got hit in the first one. It was a British idea - there was a town which they had missed on the 1st July - the towns were pretty heavily well defended - they had a lot of cellars in them - the French already had cellars - and they would stand up to a barrage fairly well - what the British were driving to do - instead of taking the town straight on - they were driving two salients - one on the left and one on the right - well a salient - especially a narrow one - you've got guns on three sides of you, and that was there whole stupid business - we had it right through the battle - until the Germans went back themselves - this bloody salient. It was only a couple of miles across it - well the whole lot of it was under gunfire from three sides - bloody stupid bastards! The town itself was hard to take for that reason. Bullecourt was the same. The French had a lot of cellars built long before the war - they used them to store good wine and different things in - and that was the damn result. There were heavy casualties. But you'd get your reinforcements - build you up again - and then go back again. I didn't go back again until close on the end of January or February I went back again. Just after Gueudecourt - that was only a raid. You didn't get to know too many - they circulated too fast anyway - I don't know how many - there must have been about 4,000 of us on the Peninsula - there were ~ Reinforcement - 125 to be exact - I think the 8th came there - see we were the 5th - there were about 70,000 Australians who went to Anzac.

At Douai - you never got out - you were in hospital - I was practically a cot case in Douai - in bed. Then we went by train to Mons - I was unconscious when I arrived at Douai - I was not unconscious - but pretty crook - I woke up before the Germans dug me out - you see, that would be about 1 o'clock of 2. That's where Bean was wrong - we were the last to make the stand down where I was - Bean in his history mentions it - Corporal Wheeler making this last stand - telling his men to fight it out like Australians. They could see the men out the front flying the white flag - and they come running down to me and the men up on the right are surrendering. I said, "Damn it - we're not finished yet." I don't know how many - there wouldn't be more than a couple of hundred on their feet - we were all then in the front line - we dribbled back from the shellholes it was about 2 or 3 hundreds to the shellhole - again Bean

was wrong - it wasn't a trench - it was a sunken road - there was a trench there, but that was a communication trench and it was the bloody thing that wrecked us too - that's the one I got back on - and when I got back there were no 15th men in sight at all - but a few of the 14th - and Emerson must have been there somewhere - I didn't see him for an hour or two - he might have come from anywhere of course. He was tearing into his reserve tucker - into his rations - he wasn't caring how the battle went - I said, "What's on Emo" - "Oh", he said, "I'm finished" - well I didn't know what he meant - but evidently he was prepared to chuck it in then, you see. We had been under pressure then about three or four hours of course from two flanks - they called that communication trench Emu Trench I think. I don't know who named it that. And it came back - it didn't come back at right angles - it came from Rencourt - the road at Rencourt that ran over to Bullecourt - course that road was partly sunken but not deep enough - oh it was good protection - it ran right over to Bullecourt. That came through - that went from Rencourt right back over - there was a mile or more to Queant - it was heavily fortified - the choice of the break-through was good enough, but it was so ill-prepared - and - see they knew all this - but they were always - and when the guns - but Gough - our bally brigade was the running fox for the 5th Army - that was our emblem - the running fox (5th Army) - the red fox. Gough - like all the others - Plummer, Rawlinson - they were in charge of 5 Armies - and they all had attached to them press correspondents - and of course, they were always putting on stunts so their name would be in front of the British public all the time - reckon they were winning the bloody war. There could have been a good chance of breaking the line then - there were about 3 or 4 attempts to take Bullecourt - all failed - for the same reason - the tanks - I tell you the tanks were damned afraid. The Germans had got a bullet made especially for their machine guns that would stop them, and the tank men were afraid to go. The 16 that were allotted to our division - only 2 got up - and they were soon knocked out - they were no good anyway - the original tanks were too big and cumbersome, far too slow and too thin-skinned, and under-powered and with too small a gun - they were useless. They never much improved on them. Old Monash - he improved on them later when he made a lot of them out of hessian and battens - I met some of the boys in England after the war - that were in the battle - and they said "Oh yes, we were in the tank corps. Our own." I said, "How was that" - and he said, we made a lot of tanks out of bloody string and battens and bolted them together and tacked hessian over them and stuck a bloody what's-a-name. A man walked in front - on the front but inside the tank - with a machine gun - that's the only gun it had - 6 men carried this tank - they were 8 miles behind the bloody front line the first day. Of course - the Germans were still frightened of them - because I think that armour piercing bullet they had couldn't have been in very great supply - but those two - they were some of the original ones - they were under-gunned - they only had bloody machine guns - they were bloody useless - and too thin-skinned - see they were three-quarter inch on the wall - well that German gun would go through it - and the artillery would make a mess of it in a few minutes - they were pretty accurate the German gunner - they were good men - the German was a damn fine soldier - he was a bloody good soldier - I found them - every time that I went up against them I found them damn good soldiers - equal to the Australians - better than the Tommies. They'd stand and fight when the day was against them. We could have held on at Bullecourt if the artillery - I held onto two bombs - it would be about 12 o'clock when I still had those two bombs - and I never got them away (threw one) - I got hit. But the lads - there'd be more than half - which was - you see the 15th were to go on and take this second trench - as Bean called it - which I told you was no trench - it was a wide open road. It came from a village behind it and it swung around and went over to Queant. Now that section was where the Germans were in strength - I don't know how many they had but I don't think they had more than a battalion - of course, by this time of the day, of course, the whole thing failed - we should have gone - we didn't go until a couple of hours later - waiting for these tanks - and some

of our officers had been laying out for hours - went back and asked old Brig. to let us go. He asked the other Colonels that were near him about what do you think of it, "Oh yes, let them go. We don't want another bloody retreat like we had last night" - it's the only time - of course the 13th and the 14th didn't have anywhere to go but where they were. They stayed there - I don't know where the 16th was - but they be in probably one of the roads - or - we were on a railway embankment where we waited those two nights, but we went right back to Favreuil - we had a hell of a bloody walk in bloody snow. We'd laid out for hours all night - it was cold as a frog. The snow hadn't been - it was not heavy - but it was still on the ground - it was a couple of inches deep - only in places too. The delay - we would have been into that bloody sunken road by well ahead of daylight (the second trench) - into it! The muck up - anyway - and only that one bloody whatsaname - and a poor one - delayed us - of course the 14th were leading us by a good mile or two - they got in and got along with practically no opposition whatever because the Germans evidently knew we were coming and they would empty a trench so there would be no-one there - it was easy taken, and then the crowding through the wire - our two battalions were to make the attack on Riencourt - we were supposed to be like the second line. It was still dark when we got up to the line - I did a foolish thing there - I'm leading about a dozen men then on the extreme right - and I should have stopped where I was - run up against the barbed wire and attempted to cut our way through - anyway I could see up on the ridge - it was rising country to a ridge - and there was a barrage - evidently of ours - we could see men - only very few - going through this opening - so OC A Company - Captain - I ran over to him and I said, "There's a break Sir!" and he said, "Yes, I see it". Will we go for there? So I went back and brought my team in - I should have gone on and looked for a bloody break in the barbed wire somewhere and gone in there - I'd have done much better - I'd have got into the German line - where that road from Riencourt went to Bullecourt, and I would have commanded practically both bloody sides of the - if I'd have got onto that in the dark and stayed there I would have commanded practically the whole approach of the valley - especially with the machine gun - I had a Lewis gunner - I would have commanded practically a third of the battlefield - instead of that I went up to the main opening and went through and that was the end of it. The 14th had gone through - there were bloody few of them left - they must have gone throug - of course they would be only a few hundred yards - they'd be going through the gap long before we - still we were nearly 1000 yards away - laid out well behind them. When we got up there was hardly - there was no-one much in the lines anyway as my orders had been - clear the right - by now I've only got half my men, and we start down this bloody - not in the trench, but on the top of the trench so you could look ahead you see, and there were no Germans there - not a German. I missed the turn-off that went to - I missed that in the night - or didn't get to it - and then I went back, now there's bloody few men on the left at all - there's only 3 left of mine - they drift away in the night to where the main body is - that always happened - nobody likes the flank you see - you're sure - nobody likes the flank - get in the main body and you've got strength you see. There were a couple of 14th men - there weren't more than half a dozen blood~ men, and they were a few of the 14th - which was right - but bar Emerson - he must have been - he was a C Company if I remember - he must have come down - he must have been on the left flank too - and come down - well he appeared to be alone when I struck him - that night muck-up previous soured them. They didn't want to go that second night - they didn't want to go - D Company would be right out on the right towards Queant - the whole brigade would be a mile across it, I'd say - it would be a mile front - that was the trouble - what happens - old Gough - who was that anxious to get his name in print - wanted the honour - that's what he told us - you Australians can have the honour of breaking the Hindenburg Line - we broke it alright - but we bloody well stayed there though! That was the bloody trouble! The reason was this - the roads were so badly knocked about - you see they had to go over that country

that had been fought on for months and months and the heavy guns - they stayed put - they didn't want to go - they were in a nice comfortable camp - there would be a lot of work (in moving) - and they never came up. Our Colonel sent someone out - I think it was - anyway somebody went out - before the first night to have a look to see what damage they had done, and his report was bad. So I can't see how - the whole thing was so hurriedly rushed - that the opening was too narrow, and only the one - where there should have been at least a quarter of a mile of that knocked down anyway before we ever attempted it. Like to go through a thing that was only a few yards wide was a bloody tragedy because dammit you had to mass - a few did break away about 10 o'clock - I was looking up our line - it was on a rise - you could see it plain enough - it was rising up probably 150 to 200 yards away - and I could see a few A Company men I recognised trying to get back - they got shot down - or dived into shell holes and stayed there - some of them got outside the barbed wire but the fire was that concentrated on the bloody opening that a man was lucky to live - that was the true thing - you were lucky to live. I know that I heard the first bloody talk of surrendering an hour before we actually did - of course Bean said the 12th was still fighting when we weren't. Well they ran into the same trouble - no bombs. I don't know - I used to try and impress on the bastards - if you've got tanks to spare send them up with a load of bombs - never made them going along the line - bring them to the position where the bombers are (dur: briefing). You couldn't carry them up - see you get into a bloody bomb fight you've got 20 - 30- 40 bombs gone in no time. Well that's all you carried. Back at Favreuil when the order came to go I reckon the AIF was just about ready to throw it in altogether that night. I've never mentioned that to anyone, because ~ we were such good troops - but there it was. There were all surly and oh goddamn it - they're not going to send us again. And one little - Humphries - he blew his toe off - he thought it was a damn show. There were no provision at all at headquarters in the sunken road naturally I thought they'd be unlimited bombs - but there were none. Going up into those battles they would leave about 50 men behind you know, could be more. They were top machine-gunners or top bombers - they were left behind with the baggage, as guard of the baggage - it was like headquarters - they would leave anything - it all depended on the strength of the bloody battalion - sometimes at the finish was only 200 strong - they wouldn't leave many behind then. But they would always leave a number of top class men out for that reason - so they had instructors for the new men coming in. They expected men to be bloody soldiers in five minutes - and in England and France they taught them to salute bloody well - form fours - squadron drill - and on the desert it was divisional drill - they were pretty fair at it. They were good at it. But the use of the bloody bomb - my company was about the best - in the whole bloody army - because I used to have them out as soon as we got into camp and draw out a bit of a trench system, and have them throwing from a trench - not upstairs - so they could get the idea of heights and so on - 30 yards was about the best you could get from most men - 40 was a damn good throw. It was very rare you ever got it. You had to have everything favourable - a bit of a run-up - and your harness off your back - that bally lever was the hindrance it would send your elevation off as a rule - elevation - that got distance you see - also the longer you could keep it in the air the better, because not only did it get nearer the target - it exploded sooner. See that was the beauty of the rifle grenade - at 80 yards - he'd explode at 80 yards about man high - he was a beauty! Along a parapet - it would clear a parapet of Germans in no-time if you were lucky enough.

When I was buried - I got my arm free and could get air - I must have been there a couple of hours - resistance had long since stopped - but the Germans had overrun it - and they were having a look at everyone - near me was a dugout with probably 60 or 70 wounded in it - I was very close to it when that shell landed - I saw one of our Captains in it - he was on his feet - not badly hurt - it was Dave Dunworth. He was A

Company - Dave Dunworth. I met him afterwards - I went to a few of the reunions - it was a long way away - I very rarely got down to Brisbane. I was a member of the Angels Remembrance Club for a long while They took us out and then when it was too late - our guns came down - they were still taking the walking men out down this long road from Rencourt - it went straight back for a mile or two - and they got onto it with our own guns - they must have got quite a few of our own lads. If they'd have put the damn thing over a couple of hours earlier a lot of us would have got out - see we wanted a smokescreen - to get through that bloody gap - it was only one - where the tank went through- there was no gap there. But they used to leave sally ports on them - I never had time to look for one and as I said, I did the wrong bloody thing - I should have stayed where I was and try and either cut my way through - I'd have been out of the battle altogether - but I'd have been - I probably would have linked up with the 12th - I think they got down - there were two roads a crossroad there - a road coming down to a village where the 12th Brigade was - there was another little village close to them - or where headquarters were (not Bullecourt). It was not Noreuil - that was a village in a valley - that was our main road into the line. The Germans carried me out on a stretcher - there was one mate with me - I never got to know him- who he was. They carried him out and he must have died in a few days, but I got on my feet anyway eventually in hospital. I went through the barrage - the Germans did. But the thing is we were off the road, you see, down where I was, we were off the main attack - where the Germans went through - a couple of shells landed near us, but they centred on the village and that road that went away from Rencourt straight back - there was a German headquarters there - it was a fair sized village - this is behind Rencourt a good mile or more away (possibly Hendicourt). There would be a wonderful target - there must have been a few hundred men went down that captured - on their feet - because - how it went to pieces so quickly, that charge that went over didn't get going until after daylight, and goddamn it - I saw it from where I was - 2 or 3 hundreds away - and you could see the men just collapsing - some caught with machine guns and rifle fire - and others diving into shell holes to get out of it - so between the two trenches - or the road and the trench - there must have been the best 5 or 6 hundred men - two battalions went you see - I think the battalions were mixed up - but I was never part of that - all the time I was there I was on the extreme left and right down in the valley. I was hunting bombs up the line when - that was a good hour or more before we were blown up. Dave Dunworth in shellhole - Dave Dunworth was on his feet - he was wounded, but - it was crowded - there must have been 40 or 50 men in it it was a big dugout - the Germans used to make them about six by six and timber them.

END OF TAPE FOUR

This road to Favreuil - we were spread along it for a mile or more, but young Humphries - I knew he was an original - what happened to him I couldn't tell you. I wasn't there when he did shoot himself - I just heard about it. It came along the line "There's one chap not going" - I've forgotten his christian name - they said "He's not going because he's just shot himself in the foot". I never saw the 15th - or later of course, when they tried to cut us up they were very cranky - it looked like in 1918 the cut some of the units up - and they didn't want to go in at all. Like one brigade would be cut up altogether - broken up. This night - that would be the evening of the 11th (ie night of the 10th) the 15th were very close to telling them to go to hell - they were very close to telling them to go to bloody hell - they weren't going.

The 4th Brigade was at a place called Heliopolis - or out in the desert. Zeitoun - at Eleliopolis there was a race-track, a casino - it was a big tourist centre - a big electric train used to run to town - it was only about 15 or 20 miles into town. We were beyond the desert - out in the desert. We were closer were to Zeitoun - which was on

the main railway - that's where we were camped - and the whole 4th Brigade - it had been a cemetery and the lads who had been digging trenches came across some skeletons - it started a digging parade - they reckoned they could find some treasure on the long since dead - this was at Heliopolis - the army stopped it because evidently the Gyppos didn't like the idea of us digging up their old forefathers. We knew it as the year of the billy can - every soldier overseas got a billy can - it was about a two gallon (pint) billy - sewn up in hessian and it contained all sorts of good things - lollies, there were sweets and biscuits and cake, and a bar or two of toilet soap which that damn - there was a soap on the Australian market known as lifebuoy - it was a disinfectant soap - but it spoiled everything that was edible in the tin - you could taste this bloody soap - even through the wrappings - you could still taste this damn soap - of course, letters getting home would be writing of the terrific bally time we were getting with body lice - so that was what they were sending - flea powder and bally disinfectant - and every parcel that came would have a lot of it in it - to combat them. Every man Jack got a billy can. There were a lot of hospitals there - it was a big base when you come to think of it (Lemnos) - the harbour was Mudros - the bally fleets of the world could have found anchorage in it - that was what they had against bally old Roebuck - the British admiral - he put all his - after the three were sunk in good style - I think the Triumph at Anzac - the Majestic at whatsaname - I forget the other - of course there were two big transports sunk by this one German submarine - they were coming down from that - in the Adriatic - that is the sea. The sent a lot of submarines down by sea, and others down by rail in pieces, and from there they used to operate - and come down into the Mediterranean. Of course, until then they were having very little trouble with transports - the - their was one Australian transport, but very few drowned - there was a Tommie one sunk. We had a six day journey on the Transylvania - what I remember about it - Spike - he'd been an ex-naval gunner - so they called for men who had served in the navy in the guns, and old Spike volunteered, and he used to take his turn on the crew of the gun - I've forgotten his other name. Sometimes they'd have practice shooting - they'd throw a couple of old fruit cases - and give it a quarter of a mile and then try to hit it - they were pretty accurate those gunners. We never saw land all the way across - we had no calling anywhere - it was so uneventful - that's all I can remember - Spike getting a turn of the guns on the stern of the boat. They gave you a bally lifejacket, and you were supposed to carry it with you all the time - it had a good use - you used it as a pillow at night-time.

The pontoon bridge at Serapeum was made of steel - the bridge itself was all wood, but the pontoons were still - but the beams themselves were timber. Of course the shipping was still well controlled - it had those signal stations - I don't know what distance they were apart - the old peacetime signal stations - like

34

a boat - she'd go from one station - and then before a ship could enter the next bally whatsaname she had to get clearance from the station ahead and so on - like it's 90 miles. Now there's 3 or 4 lakes in that 90 miles - the Salt Lakes and the Bitter Lakes and another one, apart from Timsah - the Germans had sunk - or tried to sink a bally ship in the canal - in fact they put a time-bomb on her and sent her through the Canal - and she'd cleared the Canal and was out in the first lake and you could still see half her - she went down - from Serapeum you could still see her half above the water - she was a transport - they put a time bomb on her and they just timed her too late or too early. Of course if she'd have gone down in the Canal it would have meant a hellish difference - because - in many places there was only one ship could go through - the others - there were other places where it was widened to allow ships to go - but it was mostly the lakes they used for ships mounting up coming north and

ships coming south - they would be all controlled - they wouldn't be let into the next - it's all level country and you could see the signal stations very plainly from one to another - it was well organised - there was no question about it - but the Germans evidently timed this to go off in the first stretch before you got to the Bitter Lakes and something must have gone wrong with the timing - because she got through (not Bitter Lakes - Timsah) the first stretch - it was coming from Alexandria down and blew up in the Lake - you could see it from Ismailia. It would have made a hell of a bloody job for the British because it would have meant everything would have had to go round through the Cape. They had got by 1916 - we first went to Alexandria by rail to a place called Moascar - which is near Ismailia - it would be January 1916 now - by then I was out in Gazzera - I was brought with a detail camp - I wasn't still with the 15th - I was brought to Gazzera and put in a big detail camp there until about February - but they'd been so many reinforcements come - the news of the Landing of course, had got home to Australia, and there must have been a terrific rush to join up. They got there in thousands. I understand the Cantara one - but that was a permanent railway - stations and so on all along it - but at Serapeum we had a macadam road - that is a stone road - and what we knew as the deckervil (?) tramline - and a pipeline with a 4" line - and a watering point about 8 miles out. well along that 8 mile were camp after camp of reinforcements - now at the time of the evacuation - there were two divisions to come off and one brigade. They asked a few of us - to get a few old hands with them - they asked for volunteers in the 15th - I was actually back with the battalion at that time - but they came and asked you - but you had to sort of volunteer - they didn't detail you. But a lot of men were given stripes when they moved over to the 47th - the 8th Brigade - it had never got to the Peninsula - it hadn't got passed Egypt - old Tibby's Chocolates. They wouldn't take many - the 4th Brigade took a lot of reinforcements because they were on the Peninsula. There was not a lot of resentment about moving from the 15th to the 47th. A lot of them wouldn't leave their mates you know. But they wouldn't force you - they would offer you bloody stripes - but if they said, yes, we'd like to go - good. The reinforcements didn't get a choice - they were just detailed off and parcelled up into battalions, brigades and divisions - and there was still a lot of men left over - a lot of those were undesirables too - I never knew what happened to that bloody crowd. Goddamn it - you only had to get drunk twice and you were in the black books they were still good soldiers - but the colonels objected to them when they came from that - it was a camp on its own - a detail camp - they did send quite a few home, because I can remember getting a guard duty on the train that was taking them back to the ship - it was after the Landing and a lot of men badly hit or sick and been injured - or were going to be six months - or practically no good ever - they went back in it. They were put aboard - we were sent down to Suez we took them - and put them aboard - I was with a party of about 30 or 40 guards doing guard duty - oh yes, it was easy to get sent home. I think I did tell you - in 1917 just before we were going in to Bullecourt two men joined the 15th and both had been sent home - and joined under another name and both got killed in the attack. I don't know their names - two of them came to me anyway - they were in my bally section - because they told us - they'd been sent home.

When we had to do the swept track - of course, Timsah is not a very big Lake but there is a salt arm which comes out - we were camped out - the first camp it would have a point - I don't know it's name - but there was a bally old French battleship - she was anchored out in Lake Timsah - and we could see Lake Timsah across the lake - but it was a long way to go to it - around this lake and back - I don't know - but I would think it would be 8 or 9 or ten mile to go to it - but yet a mile or two away we could see the town quite plainly. The 15th was broken up into sections - it wasn't A Company as a whole that was out on Lake Timsah - only little more than a section - see a company was 200 - well you could say - you'd be lucky to have 40 men in it. A

little chap named Carter was in charge of us - and our sergeant was Eric Simon. And we used to - all traffic going through - they used to throw cigarettes over, papers, magazines - as I told you - one day a fully cooked chook came through the air - it was a beautiful time of the year - it was April to June - the spring of the year, beautifully warm and the water was as clear as crystals - but we used to bloody well see the fish going below - you know, going up and across - and we used to drop the Mills bomb in and you'd see them scatter as the bomb went by and go to the bottom, and explode - well then there was a dive to see if you get any of them - they'd be stunned - they wouldn't be killed - and the first time this happened I saw this happen was about - and we were walking on a beach job building of this tank recess (on Gallipoli) There were two very big 20 or 30 thousand gallon steel tanks - that was to hold the reserve of water for the coming big battles - and we used to come there ever night and do this digging. Well we didn't do much work of a day we knew that as headquarters gully because Birdwood and his staff were camped there - it would be June or July - we would be camped there - like little work during the day - a lot of the beach was under observation from Gaba Tepe, and if they saw any activity they'd shell it, and that's why it was left till night. And we dug this great big recess - to carry these two big tanks - and I and two (not two) fifty others helped pull it up on rollers - the Turks were sometimes - with no target really in view - we used to go in swimming - well, for a long while - eventually it grew to be 200 men would be in swimming and they would go out well into the deep water and put in probably a few hours. The idea was you'd get release from lice for a while - and some would go out a good half mile - and a couple of hundred would be on the beach - and the Turks must have know what they were - because they had good glasses - they had good magnifying glasses - they would see these men - the thing is when you went onto the beach that was one place you didn't stay long - you'd have your clothes off in no time at all, and out into the deep water - and generally you could get into it, but two or three times we were there we could see the Germans shell these swimmers - and the men - you'd see a bally thousand arms thrashing the water - not to get away from where the shell exploded - but to get back towards it looking for stunned fish! There were very few fish in Lake Timsah - very few - the only animal I saw there was a desert dog - that's the only animal - of bird-life there seemed to be none. I don't know why - but that country was practically lifeless. The native dog was like a wolf hound, lean and a brownish-yellow country - something like our dingo but a bit bigger - he was a pure wild dog - there main job was running along the water of the Canal - you see, the ships going through - especially the P.&O. liners would throw scraps overboard - and they used to go hunting the shore for food - and they would get it that way. They were very timid - you wouldn't get very close to them - one or two were shot - mostly they'd be on the other side of the Canal, and there would be half a dozen rifles having a go at them. And two would get landed. Our main job was - there was a small Egyptian camp with camels with us - and they had a piece of softwood 12 Or 14 feet long and on it nailed a lot of hessian trailing back about 7 or 8 feet - and they used to hook a camel to this and drag it - broadside on - and it would leave behind in the sand a swept - we called it a swept track - in the morning that would be examined for footprints. They were always considering that information was going from Egypt out to the Turks. Only one morning did we every find anything - it was hard to say whether - whoever had been there he knew of it and he'd come to the edge of it and jumped practically 14 or 15 feet - there's no question about it - that's only one morning - we were there some time - I don't know - I've forgotten how long - but we were the veteran corps - were given the job as sort of recompense for our long stay on Gallipoli. We were scattered - Tussoom was our - now that was where the battle was fought - about January-February the Turks made an effort to cross the Canal - there were no Australians on duty on it there - but they hit it where an Indian regiment was, and they had boats - how they lugged those boats across the desert I don't know. Somebody mentioned - their idea is that their boats were found for them -

they came from the Egyptian side - but there was an exchange of fire all that day - they were launching the boats when the Indians saw them, and the Indians opened fire and a few Turks were killed and they ran back into the hills - but they made no effort - it was only a small raiding force - like it would have had no chance - there were anything up to 100,000 British troops in Egypt then. The sandstorms - the khamseens - they were a beggar - they'd last three days. You got very little food - because the cookhouses couldn't operate - very little food - you'd get plenty to eat because they'd have tinned stuff - you'd just open your tinned stuff and eat it in the shelter of a tent or something - you weren't short of tucker, but there was practically no cooked tucker - because they had cooks there - out in the desert. Leave into Cairo was hard to get - in 1916. Not like it was in 1915 - in the camps at Zeitoun or Mena you could get into Cairo three nights out of six. Around the white quarter around Shepherds was nice attractive city - but what we knew as the Wazzar was a very old city. No I didn't climb the pyramids - we were far on the other side of Cairo - see Cairo - I don't know what it was to Gazzerah - Gazzerah was part of a suburb, and they - you see Mena camp - the big one there - it was quite next door to the pyramids - but Zeitoun was the other side of Cairo - the eastern side - whereas Mena camp was on the western side where the pyramids and the sphinx were. I only went out to them once on leave. That was when I was in Gazzerah - that would be January 1916. Gazzerah was a suburb of Cairo - there were no barracks at all in Egypt - it was all canvas. We saw the Prince of Wales at Serapeum - it was Anzac Day - he spent Anzac Day with our Divvy and some of the boys - old Cox - and Englishman was divisional commander and some of our lads pinched his grog - not the beer, but all the bally grog - the whiskey - and he had to apologise to the Prince - these damned Australians have pinched our grog for Anzac Day. Some of our boys were in it because - it would be nearly a month afterwards - there was a roll call in our camp - in A Company - there was - Eric Simon and Dolly Carter were both there - there must have been a roll call for some reason or other - and Burns - Private Burns - no sign of him - Jim (?) Burns - you lined up in between the tents you see - the whole camp was tented. They were just very close - the tent that was behind them - here was Burns on his hands and knees trying to get up - drunk as a fool. So the 15th got the reputation for being the grog thieves - I don't know how much came our way, but like for a man to be drunk he'd want the best part of a bottle - Burns - he'd been on the Peninsula - he was 3rd or 4th reinforcement (possibly

1845A James Joseph Burns. I remember Jackie Fleet - he was an original - he went through the whole business. He was an A Company man.

On Anzac Day they gave us a day off and put on aquatic sports - I went down and watched it - there was nothing unusual happened - I didn't swim - it was all swimming. We got a bottle of beer and a very good dinner - a cooked dinner - of course, we had our cookhouses with us on that first camp out in the desert. Our main camp was at Tussoom - and from there we were spread out in groups smaller than a company. I remember we were out on the point - that point had a name - and I remember the little Tommie regiment relieving us - and they said "Get back to headquarters, and that night we were on the train and gone. They had made the Tommies march out - they looked - it was a hot day - and they were still in their English uniforms - and they looked bally wrecks - goddamn it.

When we came into Marseilles they put a guard right around the pier, and we marched from the ship to railway - and no- one was let go - right through the trip - the trains were pulling up at a town, and they'd throw a screen right around it because I know I got the job two or three times - throw a screen right around it and no-one was let out. All the big towns you'd pull up. They'd give you a good spell at it - you could buy chocolate or cake or something like that wherever you were - and a beer. You

could buy French beer - French beer wasn't liked much - it was very poor, but their cognac would interest you - that was a sort of brandy. We only saw Bailleul at night time, and we bally well marched away from there all in the dark - we never saw it at all and we marched a good deal of that night and came south to Armientieres or close to it - to a little village called Steen-werk - it had in the early part of the war the Germans had held all that part of the country - but they had been driven out - and it was back in French possession. On the Somme - the divisions followed each other - the first division first, then the second, the third of course was in Australia, and then the fourth. The fifth never came. The British had heard so much of these Australian troops - the British generals who were there said we must test these boys - and they did too (at Fromelles). Monash was a short little bird - I saw him probably at his worst - that was on the Peninsula - we were the van of that big movement on the 6 August - he was out - I just don't know how far out it was - but under the shelter of the outpost, Monash had put his headquarters - and he's running about like a stunned old chook. He was still liked - he was a good soldier - of course, he was really one of the ~ the top men. Of course, that August (1918) battle - he organised that all on his own - they went in as I told you - with dummy tanks and God knows what - and they were 8 miles behind the German line when the day finished. The old German generalissimo - he called it Germany's Black Day (Ludendorff).

I remember General Brand - he was a schoolteacher. I can't say that he was outstanding as a general because he handled all those bally Somme battles - Monash then had gone to the 3rd Divvy. He handled all those Mouquet Farm, Gueudecourt, and Bullecourt. I can't say he was anything as a soldier - he was an aged man. One thing he did, he was great on the canteen - nearly all the brigades had a canteen - and he'd have them right up close to the lines - where you could go and buy cigarettes or tinned stuff - tinned fruit and things like that. You were always short of sweets in the army - but I can't say that his handling of the troops was very good. On the day he took over, he paraded the whole brigade and he told us something about himself - one thing that - he was wearing a - he must have done some good work on the Peninsula because he had got a decoration - and that's what he said "This DSO I'm wearing was won long before any of you boys ever saw a battlefield". They never forgave him for that. He must have been well up like to get to a brigadier - because - Monash went - Colonel Cannan went - he also went to the 3rd Divvy - he got a brigade - and I forget what others went. The lads didn't like him for that reason - he was never very popular afterwards - Brand. And there's no question about it - he handled that Mouquet Farm business badly. Of course, he wasn't responsible for it - they had no idea at all what they were doing. We preferred to go at night - but the Englishmen didn't - they liked to go at daylight - with the result that their casualties were always much heavier than ours. I don't know what they call that ridge - that was near Albert - it dropped into a valley which was known as Sausage Gully - and then on the far rise - which would be over two miles away I think - well over a mile - was the village of Pozieres - and we could see this. And then in the night we were to relieve one of the second div. battalions - and our guide took us up - and there was shellfire over it nighttime of course, and then he said, the Germans were shelling it - instead of bally well letting us go on in small lots, he retired us back down the gully to another road, and we spent the night in a line of trenches that belonged to some previous battle - probably fought a fortnight earlier - backwards and forwards through those trenches we went, and daylight found us still not relieving the other battalion - it was daylight - and well after daylight before we were back on the right track again and went in - as I suggested, we went through broken into platoons and we got caught again - we lost quite a lot of men going in I know a couple of good mates of mine got caught - Bill Woodbridge and another boy. We were in the trench two or three days before we attacked. That was the first attack - we got in and were doing alright - bar we met a lot of opposition - (the night attack)

from bombing - and suddenly the bloody British guns came down on top of us - the British who were alongside us - it was bad organisation on Cannan's part - not having an officer with the British - because there was no bally arrangement - the British got knocked back and they called on the guns to help them in again - and they came down on D Company on their left - and I know their Captain and about 30 or 40 men got knocked that night by British guns. Bill Woodbridge got killed (going in on August 6) by a shell burst (2008 Woodbridge W. I. - DOW 14/8/16 - Wheeler's number was 2011). Evidently what - I don't know where he got hit - but it must have been - of course, he died of wounds - I know he got back to hospital, so it must have been an internal wound he died of. The other I can't remember the other one - although they were both good mates. I remember Bill well, because he was also a New South Welshman - he came from Grenville in New South Wales - they were wheat farmers - there were three brothers - Johnnie and Bill (2007 John Michael Paul Woodbridge and Patrick Benjamin Woodbridge 2000 - J.M.P. killed 8/8/15) - Paddy, he was not much of a soldier - he was drunk and asleep anyway. The last I saw Paddy early 1917 with a couple of old molls hanging onto his arm - he got hit but got back to England. Johnnie got killed on the Peninsula in August - Bill got killed in France, again in August. He would have died in hospital - I know he was still living when they carried him out of the line. That's where the Germans beat us all the time - we had 18 pounder field guns against trenches - and they fought a war with the bloody thing - where the Germans main gun was a 5.9 - that was a 50 pound shell - she was a killer. She would break down a trench line, and our 18 pounder she'd see where she'd break - or after - the best indication you could see of after - was after you'd taken country and you'd find a position where there'd been a battery of guns - and you could see where they had been trying to silence them - we were outgunned the whole bloody time - their main gun was a 5.9 that I told you - now that was a 56 pound shell - well it would break a trench line down and kill - whereas the 18 pounder would only - they had a smaller gun - it was what we knew as the whizzbang - I don't know - I never saw it - it was a light gun - but the 5.9 gun was their main gun - the 8" shells were the howitzers - that was classed among the big guns - it just shows you - they fought a war - we thought that the 18 pounder was quite a good gun - it was - in the field - but against the trenches it was no good and 90 percent of their guns were 18 pounders - the Germans next good gun - of course the 5.9 - it would go 5 or 6 feet in the ground and knock a trench down you know - the whole would be 6 or 8 feet deep - they exploded up and out - they'd go in about 5 feet before they'd explode - the hole would be 5 or 6 feet deep - but a battlefield - especially like the Somme - it had been fought over so bloody much that you could hardly find a piece of ground that hadn't been turned over. It looked more like a bally broken sea that a piece of land, you know - the 5.9 It was about a 10 or 12" howitzer that would bury you - you see, the Germans knew - this is at Bullecourt - they knew what that front line trench was because they had built it. It was 8 feet deep by about 10 feet wide - it was built to stop our tanks - and they turned the big guns onto us. At Pozieres they didn't use the howitzers on the trenchlines - they were mostly used on transport lines like behind the lines carts or lorries would come and deposit their gear - and probably come up to within two to three mile of the line, and from there the small limbers would take over. The 5.9 was a 'gun-how' - that's a gun-howitzer - very short barrels and high trajectory, but there's no doubt she was the gun that nearly

39

won the war for the Germans - she was a beautiful gun. That was their main gun whereas our main gun was an 18 pounder. We were out-gunned. It must have been 9 o'clock at night when I was wounded at Pozieres - I stayed out there a good while - you feel shocked, you know. You don't know where you're hit for a good while, but after I was lying there - oh young Jackie Fleet - he must have been in the bombers -

he came along to me and I've still got my bag of bombs on my back - there were probably only a couple of them gone when he took it off me - and then he said to me, "How are you feeling?" and I said, "Pretty crook." The explosion makes you bally well (confused). I was hit in the calf of the leg of this one - and in the rump - well to move the legs - they were in pain you see, so I must have been an hour or two making up my mind, because I started to crawl back to the lines, and I got there - it must have been the best part of 8 or 10 hours to cross that bally No Man's Land - because when I got back to the line and had a look above the parapet - if you knew your job - you'd go from shell-hole to shell-hole - that's how you got about. Run a few yards - probably 10 or 20 yards and dive into a shell hole - then you'd poke your nose up to see if you could see anything - and then you'd have another bloody dive. It was daylight when I got back - the 16th had filed into our lines after we'd gone I got into a - the Germans had built some very fine dugouts there, and I know I went and sat down in that for a long while (this was right in the firing line in the German lines) I went and sat down. I don't know who it was - but they said "Oh make an effort to get back Lofty". Our headquarters were not far away - they were at a place we knew as Gibraltar - that was in the little town of Pozieres - but I didn't call in there - once I got going - the pain allowed me to keep going - so I crossed the Pozieres village and out onto the plain - and passed a section of road - I don't know whether it had a name - and there was a dressing station there - and I got a good drink of very hot tea and got the wounds dressed there. And somewhere about - during the day - I don't know what time - there was a horse (?) came and picked me up - I got back to the dressing station on my own - once I got them warmed up - they weren't bad you see. If you let them get cold it takes you a little while to get going - the lads went back that night - after getting that hammering - but didn't take it again. They had four goes to get it - and at last they sent a division to take it. I went down through Sausage Gully through Albert and you were on the road then - and you would be shipped to the nearest railhead - there was a very big English canteen there there was a village there where we had camped for quite a while going in. This bally big English canteen was not far away - it was only a small village. A very nasty accident happened there - the officer in charge of the - a line of reinforcements came and joined us - I forget his name - he must have been in charge of the bombers, and he took them out to educate them in the use of the Mills. I knew none of them. But they were handling a bomb and for some reason it exploded - there were four or five killed - they were being educated how to use a bomb. This must have been in February 1917 before Bullecourt - No February 21st Sergeant Farr was killed - that was at Baicourt - I may be a bit confused about this. How the hell it happened - for a pin to come out there must have been a bit of carelessness somewhere, because there were 4 or 5 injured as well - 2 or 3 killed - and they were only getting a lesson how to use them. I never got any promotion though I practically led the bombing section into Pozieres (should be Bullecourt). I didn't become a Corporal until after Bullecourt in 1917 - I was never a Lance-Corporal. Because for 18 months I lead the A Company bombers and I had no rank at all - just that I happened to be the best bomber.

When I went across to England - I went way up to the north of England - into a hospital at Sunderland - that's up near Newcastle and I was in hospital for 2 or 3 months. It was very good indeed there. It was an English hospital turned into a war hospital - it was like English hospitals - we were very well treated of course. After the wounds healed - oh, there was an operation in France to get this bit that hit the backside. This was down somewhere on the French coast - perhaps Bolougne - there was an operation on this - and they missed it - I went to France and they did nothing about it - the wound healed and I carried it for 8 or 10 years - and then in 1930 - something started it - the old wound broke open and started to bleed - so I came down to repat, and they took an X-Ray and showed the metal was still there. It was a pretty big bit - about the size the German potato masher as we knew it -

wasn't a very deadly weapon you know - it hit the pelvis and shot up and was laying right near the kidney. I came down and Rosemount was our main hospital - a Doctor Dixon took it out there. The operation they held in France - they must have declared they got it - because they were nearly a foot off where the bally metal was - where it entered. It was way up near the kidneys where it eventually lodged. In Sunderland it was the usual hospital procedure you know - it was quite a nice hospital - they looked after the British soldier well. I had a tooth knocked out and I went and saw a dentist - I reckoned the army should have replaced it you see - so I asked him to pull the stump out - there was another one here - they must have been a ricochet - they couldn't have been direct - because you can see the gash (over the right eye) - there's two bits still in there from that bomb- they weren't very deadly. I was - like you always are - you're looking ahead - you generally have a couple of men - they're to guard your flank you see as you go ahead - you'd speak to them "Come on - we'll go" and all get up together and run - but this time - there were about 7 Germans came out of a blasted (dugout) on my right flank and before I - I was carrying a bally grenade in my rifle - you usually did - it was in a launcher - as soon as I saw them - I had the gun at high port - I dropped it and pulled the trigger - I see this bird get up - and they used to show the bomb under-arm - it's midnight you know - dark - and that bomb couldn't have been far behind me and yet it never looked like killing me - that one in the calf of the leg was a bit of a nuisance - it's hit a nerve, and it's often a bloody nuisance now. I didn't see the Germans - once their bomb went off they must have reckoned - because I looked around to see - and I've got no- one - when his bomb went off - they must have got out of sight somewhere - they'd reckoned they'd got the only man that was there. You don't know exactly what's happened bar that you're in an explosion - you're not mentally balanced for a short while - you're on ~he floor of course - it knocks you down - you don't know where you're hit either - bar that leg got cold and then they start to hurt - or if you want to move then they will bally well (play up). There were 7 who got out - and I stayed in that shell hole for quite a long while, I know. It was then Jackie Fleet came over - he came over looking for bombs. He knew that I was on the flank - with the bombers - he came over and he took the bag of bombs and went back - what happened at Mouquet Farm - the farm had a great big cellar which would carry a couple of hundred men - well they over-ran it - and these Germans came up behind them. They had quite a bomb battle there and as I said the provision of bombs was always our trouble - I've never forgotten that great pile I saw at Bullecourt. There must have been anything up to 10,000 bombs in the shell hole. After I was in hospital for 2 or 3 months we got a fortnight or so in convalescence camp - that was close to a sea beach - in fact it was right on the coast - it was a coal mining centre - and the coal miners there, they had a very nice club and we were all invited in and treated to the very best - you'd see some bird - you might be sitting in the billiard room and some bird would come in with a paper of some sort in his hand - and leave a jug of beer on the seat where you were sitting. It was fineable to give a man in 'blues' - convalescences wore blues always - an entirely blue suit - a light blue suit - from the hospital, and you couldn't serve him beer - that was just army style - I know no publican would serve you beer. But a miner might come in and you might be sitting on a form - he'd have a paper in his hand - all ruffled up or something like that pretending to read it or something - but in it would be a jug of beer. and he'd look at you and drop this jug on the floor under your seat and duck away. It was a beautiful bally place - it was called Eastham - it was a coal mine there - it's only a few miles from Sunderland - on the east coast. They tell me eventually the coal seam went right out under the sea - into the North Sea - and the miners went out that far. The coal was dug well out - a mile out into the North Sea - we had a couple of weeks there convalescing - there were only about 10 or 15 men there altogether - there was a South Australian - Bill somebody - he went with me - he was South Australian and had a wound in the thigh - his wasn't doing too well when they let him go, but he came down - I don't know whether he came with

me - after putting the fortnight in we were sent to London - to Horseferry Road. They'd equip you then with a complete gear - you got a whole new uniform - underclothes and all - it was - generally your own would be blood-stained and shot through and torn sometimes with barbed wire - like it would be pretty nearly useless - your old uniform. You'd get an entirely new outfit - boots and all. You would sometimes only get English uniforms until the lads started to buck about it - they didn't like wearing the British uniform, and they eventually got the Australian uniform made in England. That first uniform - especially the one I was still wearing it - the one I got hit in - that I'd left Australia in. It still had the hole of the blasted Gallipoli shrapnel just over the backside - it still had it in - I never got it patched - but the material was a beautiful material - a woollen material - and the jacket was - of course the pants weren't - they were destroyed - but the coat itself - it was really a beautiful job even then - cleaned and bally (pressed) it still looked a nice bally coat. The English one was made with a material - it was wool - but nothing like the quality of the Australian wool - that's why they didn't - and they didn't like those long pants either you know - see the English men - we wore breeches of course - both in the Light Horse and the infantry - that was one fault it had - the Light Horsemen had - when it came to the knee it had quite a long bally bottom part - which you could lace up - but the other only had a narrow one which you tied up with the tape - and it was a nuisance because it would - your puttee would pull free of it - I know - crawling about in the night - your bally - a piece of material sewed onto the breeches, you see - the Light Horse's was about a foot long - and it was good - the legging came well above it - but the other was only about 4 or 5 inches and it was too short. It would pull out of the puttee - and then you'd have an exposed leg - and crawling about at night-time you have an exposed knee. I don't know why they had the breeches instead of the trousers - but it was a good uniform - but for those breeches coming out of the puttees. Of course, we used to alter it by sewing another piece of material about a foot long onto it ourselves - then it would never slip out - but the army never changed it I don't know what - oh, the army all over - it would never change anything, you know - never change anything.

Horseferry Road - to describe it - it was a part of Australia. It was up near Victoria railway station - up that way - and it was rather a low quarter of London, but they bought it up, or leased it, and made it the headquarters - there was quite a little Australia there. They had a very big - the women in London - Australian women - had started a very big tuck shop there, and they had all sorts of things there. Actually the British tradesmen - like tailors, and so on, all flocked to it - because some of the boys would get their strides altered - and when they got the Tommie jacket - they would alter those - two put two breast pockets on them, and the back pocket on the strides - copying the Australian uniform. But they made such a song and dance of it - they started making the Australian uniform in England - but the material was never the same - it was still a very good material - but it was shoddy compared to what we got in Australia - now that coat - when I did let it go - was still in very fine condition - I'd worn it practically - then nearly solidly for two years - I had a tailor made one when I got caught at Bullecourt - that was the catch the girls - we didn't like the English one - they gave me a Tommie uniform at Horseferry Road - and I went and got it made into a bally Australian uniform - and the boots - they were black boots - we didn't like those - we wore a tan boot - and polished up it was quite an attractive uniform - but the Tommie ones - well there must have been a dozen tailors there that would alter your uniform for you. And they were selling all sorts of things - Australian - some had got some emu feathers - and some of the boys who were infantrymen would put up the emu feathers - and some had - the Western Australians - they had possum fur - in their hat bands. She was a little Australia. But there was not a thing

that you couldn't get made there - your colour patches and all that sort of thin - they would fix them for you - wound stripes - about 1916 they started to give us an A - on your patch - I got one of those.

In my first leave in 1915 - the war hadn't affected London - but in 1916 the war had well and truly wrecked it - they put a sign up in the pubs - NO SHOUTING ALLOWED - so if you wanted to have a beer for your mate you had to give him money to buy it - shouting in the sense of 'shout your mate a beer'. Four or five of you got together - right - you had to have enough silver to go and get a drink from him - he wouldn't take it from one person - each man paid for his own - I think the idea was to stop the - England was getting to be a land of heavy drinkers - see these Australians were getting home with a lot of money you know - you see a lot of us had had no pay for a bally long while - and we had a few hundred in our paybooks - and some of us had money as well in the Commonwealth Bank - I had 700 in the Commonwealth Bank - (Q. about contribution to Red Cross parcels) oh no, the Red Cross paid for all those damn things - the food parcels and clothing parcels. When we came back I had 18 months field pay in my paybook - it was up near 200 pounds. Only once did I really get out of London - I went over to the north of Ireland - the second trip I did go to Edinburgh - but then it was winter time both occasions I was there - and the weather was bad - so I came back to the south - weather was bad - wet and cold and drizzling - but the first time I never left London - I did - I got out as far as Oxford and had a look around the universities there. The second time - of course, I'd been up close to it - near Sunderland - that's what took me back there - I went back to see some people I had met in hospital - I went back to see them on the way back to Edinburgh. They were very good to us - but by 1916 the bloom was off it. By then there must have been 100,000 Australians in England - the 3rd Divvy - and wounded and all from France - and our name was rather tarnished - mostly through drunkenness. The lads used to - with plenty of money - reckoned they'd never see another poor day - all took to the grog. We used to go and see plays - oh for me, I used to enjoy the plays - I practically went to a play every night - there were some good shows too. The only one I really remember was Chu Chin Chow - that was Oscar Ashe and Lilley Braton (?) - they were the two leading people in it - it was more of a review than a play - it ran for a long while anyway - I saw it twice - it came to Australia after the war. Everything was chinese - you see Choo Chin Chow - that's how I would spell it - Oscar Ashe - he was one of the top actors in London - and Lilly Braton - she was one of the leading actresses in England at the time. Brayson - I think that's how it is spelled. I think it was something like the Forty Thieves, if I remember correctly - I know there was a lot of bally big vats on the table (stage) and out of these used to come bally villains and all those sort of things. It was - in fact - most of them were not really a play as we knew it - they called them reviews - what I used to go to mostly were these - in Sydney we had them - old Harry Rickards (?) - it was a vaudeville show. Now you would have all that - there was no big play in it - it was what it said - just a bally review - a company - all dressed up - but they were - there'd be a dozen different players in it - all separate - oh, some very very good shows, because they would only show for a quarter of an hour - then go off and another new lot would come on - all dancing - and all sorts of jugglers - and those sort of things - it was mostly - there was everything in it - but it was not like plays which had a story to tell. No there'd be a dozen different people putting on their act. You used to go on the London underground - you used that pretty frequently once you got to know the layout of the city - it was the quickest means of transport if you wanted to get out into the suburbs. It sort of encircled London - underneath - under the Thames - there would be a plan on every railway station - a plan of the whole circuit - where to go - and if you wanted to go to so-and-so you'd have to take such-and- such a line. It handled a lot of people - they mostly had escalators to get rid of the crowd coming up

from the station up to air - up to the top. At every station they had escalators - like as a couple of hundred people came up - they'd shift them in no time on these escalators. I didn't have any friends

43

in London at that time - no, you never bothered much with the Englishmen - you'd probably have a few friends of your own among the troops - of course, the Londoners weren't given to entertaining either - you had to get out into the country to meet people who would invite you to their homes - in the smaller towns - there were too many Australians anyway. Too many Australians - I didn't have any relatives in England - you'd pick up a few mates in London - our centre seemed to be Waterloo Road - and Peel House, that was another - they were places to stop - the soldier could get a bed and a feed for about a bob - and that's where we used to congregate - around those two places - Peel House was the best of the two - that had been an old police barracks at one time - and it would take hundreds of people in it - that's where you'd congregate of a night-time and go to bed - daytime you'd go anywhere - of course, there was a lot to see in the old city. We'd all go to Westminster, Houses of Parliament, St. Paul's - those places were full of history. You'd go amongst the bally - see down at Westminster you could see the old dead kings and queens - all just thrown in a corner - in their coffins. This is Queen Anne - this is Queen Whatsaname - their they are - all in a bally row. But they'd all have a flagstone - you'd walk over it - this is - a few Australians got named - I don't know whether they were buried there - but mostly they'd be English politicians - there'd be a flagstone - but I don't think he was buried there - not like the Whatsaname down below - the old guide would take you and show you - oh yes, this is the king's or the queen's chamber, and there these old Whatsanames - here's a couple of kids belonging to someone that never grew up, yet there they are named - Prince Whatsaname - Prince So-and-So. In 1916 I was in England when the first bomber raids came - oh, it didn't do a great deal - they killed quite a few - of course, they dropped them in what they knew as the West End - and they would kill quite a few people - one dropped near the Lyceum Theatre when it was crowded - it killed quite a lot. But it was not like the bombing of the 40's. They might have dropped a dozen bombs, and you'd only hear of one or two. You could see them at night - the searchlights would hit it - and it was just like a big cigar floating in the sky - with the flak bursting all around them - there was great jubilation the night young Robinson shot one down - he must have - when he got above them he must have signalled the earth to stop gunfire - and he got in and set fire to this plane. On the second escape - (the zeppelins in Germany) - that part of Germany - there was a hell of a lot of wasteland - marshland - it is wasteland - it's not cultivated - I think it's in Westphalia - I'd want a good map of Germany - what I had then was only one of my own drawings taken from good army maps that somebody had been sent from Germany (England) - it was sent in the back of a hair brush or a clothes brush. You could buy a compass from any store - any little store would have those sort of things - you'd often make sure by giving them a bar of soap or chocolate - you mightn't have many - you might deal - but mostly those sorts of things if you wanted a pair of pliers or a small axe - you'd get a foreigner prisoner of war to do it for you - one of the Belgians - they would be trusted - they were hardly treated as prisoners at the finish - the French the Germans disliked - but he was more than generous to the Belgians - especially the Belgian officers - they were practically running the prisoners of war camp at the finish. The Russians - they damn well hated - they gave them a hell of a time. Like this last war they murdered six million Jews - I think they must have murdered six million soldiers in the first war. Like that Russian told us - at Stargard there must have been some thousands of graves - headstones (crosses) - as far as the eye could see - in this forest. You could get news - you'd get the German newspapers - they didn't stop you

buying a German newspaper and you soon learned to read the press anyway - I could speak German fairly well when I finished Germany - I learnt pretty quickly - you had to if you wanted to get away - and work with them - if you got on a farm - you'd have to learn how to speak German - occasionally you'd meet a German who spoke English. END OF TAPE FIVE

The old man had evidently died and the boys hadn't grown up - so she was boss of the farm - a girl about 24. And she could speak English - she'd learned to speak English - and she spoke it well, although pretty slowly. But after we'd been there a short while - there were three of us worked there together - a Scotsr - he tried to do a bit of a line with her - and a Staffordshire boy - and - but Magda had already got a Russian lover - so I don't think Scotty did too well oh, he might have after I'd broken - he was a trier.

44

nan

I never saw the boys again - from there they did a march up the back of the line to Lille and Fort MacDonald - I tell you what - Britain was giving the German prisoners some bally rough treatment - they were putting a big lot on the British boats crossing the Channel - and when they were torpedoed they'd be drowned. I saw prisoners working behind the lines - they were mostly on road-building shell-fire would break it, even those good roads from northern France - beautiful roads - those heavy guns would play hell with them - I think we spent the night in the village near Bullecourt I think, where we were separated. They called out any man with a wound. There was a search - we were searched there - you handed in all your bally private articles - a few dodged it - your pocketbook with your money and a few letters like that - some of them dodged it - it wasn't much of a search - they just asked you - men went through them with a bag - I don't think they took watches - I never wore a wristwatch anyway. Yes it was a horrible show - and in the next one the second divvy made a worse muck of it. I don't know why - they took it too cheaply - they had the idea the German was beaten - this is in 1917 - this is early 1917 - they reckoned they would break them - on 11 April 1917 they brought a division of horsemen up behind us - I saw some of them - they came up - trotted up onto the bally - it's a long slow rise - and they got about half way up and the German guns got into them - they didn't stop long! They didn't stop long! It was a bally stupid thing. Their intelligence was pretty poor - the Germans were always well ahead of them. They were far better organised - from what I could see of the British officers he was just simply a dunderhead - he was a bloody dunderhead - brave enough - of course, they'd die. As what'sname said - they knew how to die - a pity they didn't know a bit more about living and bloody well fighting. But the stupid - it was generally a rushed job - they'd execute a raid alright - anything small - but anything bigger than that - it would go to pieces. In Belgium - typical of the British - it was low-lying country and it rained, and in no time at all the whole country was a quagmire - and they had wooden roads - wooden planks about 8 by 3 or 4 bolted together and laid down for a road - 14 feet across it - thousands of men were wounded and buried in that damn mud and drowned. Thousands of rounds of ammunition were lost - a wheel would come off a cart - a limber would have a wheel knocked off it - and they would just toss it off the road out of the way - you had to get up in the night-time - I don't know why they fought in such a place - they fought on there 7 months - and that destroyed the British - 700,000 men - the Somme half a million - I think it was the Third Battle of Ypres. 700,000 men killed. I'd got out of hospital and was down in London, and saw a few of the 3rd Divvy men and saw a few of them, and asked where they were camped - and I went looking for them on the Plain - on Salisbury - George - a brother in law was in the artillery - George -

and a couple of other relatives, so I reckoned I'd go and see them and tell them the news - what they were going to face - but I didn't find them. That would be late 1916 - because I was in hospital up in Newcastle - August I got hit - the English hospitals were damn good - and the English people were really good to you when you were home and wounded - in the convalescent camps, they'd come and entertain you - take you out for drives and God knows what. After I was wounded I walked back - none of the wounds seriously - no limbs broken, you see, all had gone practically straight through bar one, but that hit the pelvis and came up near the back - it wasn't taken out until about 1930. I got five out of it. There are a couple of bits still around the eye, but the elbow got it - they weren't very deadly - we called them the potato masher - they were a

a percussion job - they were a jam tin sized bomb with a wooden handle - they used to throw theirs under-arm - but they weren't very deadly - you had to be very close (to be killed) - that bomb couldn't have been more than 5 yards behind me because that man was at least 10 or 15 yards from me when I saw him - they came up a (trench or dugout) - of course, you had always a couple of mates - you'd keep them behind to watch your flanks - and when I looked back - I've got no-one, and the next thing this bird came up from the right - again I could see him the man - a silhouette - against the barrage - I could see him jump up and his bomb's away. I had a rifle grenade in - I didn't think I was so close to the German lines - they must have been well in advance of the German line - which we used to do ourselves - sometimes the Germans shelled your line and you'd get out in the shellholes in front of them - and if they came over - of course, they'd get met half-way - but again the main body swept away to the left of me - the main body - every big - it was night of course - every big attack - on a flank - you'd notice that - men were inclined to drift to where the numbers were - of course, you don't look behind - your eyes are fixed ahead all the time - for movement - you were always expecting them - and when you know you are within - if there's any movement of course, the first thing you get away is your rifle grenade - he's as good as 60 -80 yards - if you could get a couple of those into them - it sort of steadied them, because they'd be inclined to duck and that would give you a few minutes to get on top of them - the farm itself - it was hard to tell where the line was - the country was more like the sea than the land - it was so turnup with shell fire. It had been so much shelled by the British before they attacked in July, and all through July and early August they had been pumping shells into it - it looked more like a damn sea - I don't think there was one inch of level ground on it - of course, it wasn't bad ground to fight on because you dived into a shell-hole and then poked your nose up to see anything ahead - and you had no distance to go to the next one - you'd dive into it - you'd get an advance that way! You'd get lost though. See they'd lift the barrage onto the second line and that creates a sort of bally glare - just like a distant bushfire - and you see any movement pretty easily - of human beings anyway. That first night - our guide bloody well lead us up the garden path. We had casualties going in the next morning - we didn't get in until - we were hours late - it was daylight when we got back - he said - oh, I know another road - and he took us back and we got lost in a maze of trenches - I don't know what happened - I think he disappeared - and we went back to where we knew the old Colonel was - it was known as Sausage Gully - there was a bit of a - there must have been an old quarry there - good cover - and a lot of the battalion headquarters were in it - and Brigade headquarters too - ours went on a bit further - I don't know whether they went on during the night - old Cannan - they had a beautiful dugout in Pozieres - in the village - we called it Gibraltar - a bally great big cement top on it - that was an old French cellar and built onto by the Germans. In those villages they had quite a lot of - the French for their own use evidently kept stores in the cellar. Also in the champagne country it was a good cellar for wines. But a quite a lot of them - it was a fair sized village - but there was nothing of it left when we got there in August - nothing of it at

all. But the farm itself - it had been a big farm - a very big farm - and it had cellars - that could hold - and did hold anything up to 2 or 3 hundred Germans. The first night we never found it (attack) - the second attack - like the entrance - you could tell where the farm had been. It was a pile of broken red bricks - that was all - nothing standing - but the second time they went over it and the Germans came up behind them. They had three goes to take that place. Once they had that garrison of two or three hundred men they had them beaten you see, but that was late in August - early September. It took them three blasted attacks to take it - for that blasted reason - they'd suddenly find - they'd go over these - all it was was a mound of broken red bricks - they wouldn't find the entrance - and they'd go over it - and the first thing they'd know there were Germans in their rear. The 15th and a British battalion were to go over on our left - I was on the extreme

46 right - they were to go over and they made a balls of it - and went back and reported they had been repelled and called the guns down - well that put the guns onto the 15th as well. They were joining - D Company being on the left - I know it played hell with D Company - it practically destroyed D Company. It was at nighttime when it was shelled - you don't see much bar the exploding shells - the light comes from the explosions - it's a very poor light you know - you might be able to see about 50 yards ahead of you, but no more - it would last - it damn well goes on and on. They support you - like generally if you're successful and you hold - they'd support you for a couple of hours afterwards - that sort of thing shouldn't have happened. The first escape we had 270 miles to go - I think that - we were on the job on a farm - what we were mostly given was cutting pit props - they're about 6' long - every farm of any size in Germany - they're not separate like in Australia there's a cluster of houses in a village - and their fields are spread all around them - not fenced. But in that they will all have a pine forest, and what they do is - some will have two and some will have three - the young aged - almost a sucker - sapling - they'd go through and thin them - anything that was too close - they'd take a few of them out - anything that looked faulty and not making growth - they'd dig it out and then cut about two or three six foot lengths of them - only about 4 to 8 inches (wide) and that's what they were used for - the pine forests - they were very plentiful in Germany - they were a damn good hiding grounds for the Vicloafer - when - we'd look at the time - that's the only time I think I ever carried a watch - was on the bally escaping - we'd look at the time so that we would have a good hideout before daylight - and it was into these forests that we would go - you'd say, oh well - in winter time it would be nearly 8 o'clock before it's daylight - so by 7 o'clock you'd be looking round for a bally forest to camp in. And what you would do then is climb into the - you'd scrape the it's all pine needles you see - you'd go to the side of the (tree) - I think it was the southerly side of the tree we used to go to and scrape them all away - and you'd find probably six or eight inches of pine needles and you'd find 6 or 8 inches of them, but you'd find nice dry ones underneath - and dry soil - well there you'd make your camp - and also you could get a handful to light your fire - and then - around the bottom side of the pine there would be dead branches that's what you'd break down when you got your camp rigged you'd boil the billy - you might if it's a bit thin - you might cut a few bally - or break a few boughs - it was something I often craved for was a sharp little tomahawk to get them and point them and stick them in the soil so you could - your fire wouldn't be seen - you see at daytime the main trouble was the farmer himself and his dogs - they'd be coming around looking around the headlands of the crops, and probably might have a working team - if you could - and had the time - you wouldn't make a camp of that you see. But the farmer, he'd be always poking around - and his dogs - they'd start barking - they'd get the scent of you - then the old farmer would get onto what ever it was - and so the dog would come in - and the farmer would follow him - right into your camp. But I never got found by a farmer, I was always on the road when I got caught. But I had some very close escapes, I know

from them - the dogs - mostly the big dachshund type of dog - a big wolfhound sort of dog (Alsatian). The beggar - I know hunting - when I was looking for a sharp spike - a tool to break the staple out of the boat that held a chain and padlock - and again the dogs were a nuisance. The people on the German farms were pretty good to you - it was just the farmer and his wife - there were very few young men - no young men - all the men had gone. The girls were practically running the farms with prisoners of war. Especially Russians. I know there were a lot of Russians - there were millions of Russian prisoners taken. They were mostly Englishmen whom I was working with me - and Scotsmen. We had some Roumanians one time - we had three Russians one time. But we were on the job of cutting those pit props - you dig all round them and then cut the roots and then pull it over, and then bark it and cut it up into (lengths) - or you'd half bark it so the rest of the bark would fall away, and you'd have a nice straight prop anything from 8 to 4 inches on top for a pit prop down below (in the mines). Of course, being an NCO they couldn't put you anywhere - you first

47

had to volunteer to go to work. I volunteered simply to get out onto a farm so that I could escape - that was the idea. And save enough parcels - see in the lager German rations were so poor that you'd eat all you Red Cross food - and they were hard to get out of - the big German lager. They had guardhouses on the corner - about an 8 foot high fence - they had no electric wire - but they had a lot of barbed wire - and on the corners and two or three places along the side there'd be these guardhouses looking over the camp - generally a man or two in it with a machine-gun, and they would reduce it - and a man patrolling from guardhouse to guardhouse all night long. There were plenty of escapes from them, but they were mostly got out of by tunnelling - two or three places they tunnelled right under it - and got away. I never met anybody who was doing a tunnel - I reckoned the idea of getting a job on a farm - the reason you sought such a job was so you could build up your stock of rations from the Red Cross parcels - the Germans would keep the parcels - and they'd give it out tin by tin - but then instead of opening it you'd put it among your swag. Bread was the main thing - it was hard to get bread of any sort - or biscuits. Their own bread - you couldn't eat it if you were on the road - and it was strictly rationed - and the biscuits they used to send from home were good, but they used to go mildewy - they tried bread for a while - made in Switzerland and sent - a special loaf - but it wouldn't - one I think - we were given five parcels a month - I was never on the breadline - I think they tried it and then gave it away. But the parcels would have biscuits - it was a bit like the little army biscuit - it was quite a good one - it was a wholemeal biscuit - it would keep too - but that big hard one we had - it had gone out of commission long before I was in Germany. But that wholemeal biscuit was quite a good one - and it was a good meal for this reason - it was nourishing whereas that - made of that white flour - it had nothing much in it but the bloody starch. You'd hide your food under your bedclothes or under your mattress and so on - until you'd got a pile. Once you were in Germany - they never - occasionally they'd run a search through the barrack - but they were rare. And on the farms you'd be put in a part of a house - or a cottage on your own mostly - and they were very frail bars put in the window. They were only temporary - that's how I got out the first time. It was three bars and I just got hold of a screwdriver and unscrewed them and put the screws back until I was ready to go (this is on the farm north of Soltau). You always went at night. You had no hope much of going at daytime - even on a farm - you'd always go at night - they'd leave you to do what you liked at night - there was a compound around you in most places - a little compound around the farmhouse and a gate with a lock on it. They'd come and count you up before they went to bed about 9 o'clock - they'd come and say "Alles da?" - that's "All there?" and slam the gate - and you'd say "Yes" - only this night they were one short. The days were very much alike - that

was from Emlinghausen - a blasted - nearly a thunderstorm - that was in the summer-time - a blasted summer storm wet us nearly every bloody day - goddamn it I said - this is worse than the other one - the other two were in winter time - it was mostly snow. It was in January 1918 that I first went. That one in the finish was a bit of a fraud anyway - we only got outside the lager and they caught us. The first one - I waited till midnight and then slipped these bars away - I had unscrewed them already and put them back so that they just lifted out, and into the night that way. I was on my own the first time - my mate wouldn't come the first time. I was on my own. There were no Australians in the first one. I was with three - one a Scotsman and one a Staffordshire man - but when it came to a showdown they wouldn't go. That was the best run I ever had - I was about 10 days or a 14. I went a long way - it was only the last one that turned out to be a failure altogether, where we were given a chance on a farm. (He went 100 miles west). It was hard to get over the Ems - the first time it was in the middle of winter and it was damn cold - but I went fully clad - I put the rucksack on my back and walked into the river - why I did it - there was a bridge up above me I'd been watching for a long while - I'd got there probably a day or two earlier. And it was a railway bridge - but it was all lit though - electrically- and I

48

said damn it, I'll have a go. And this night I laid on the bank - it took me nearly two days to dry my clothes anyway - that was the best camp ever I had in Germany - these suckers had grown up about 8 foot high and hid you - but somebody had cleared a patch about 10 foot long by about 5 or 6 feet wide and had a campfire - and a heap of blasted bracken ferns for a bed - somebody had been camped there a long while - the bank would be about 15 or 20 feet high - going over the rail bridge - steel bridge - lit up - but there was a bit of a shadow under the lattice work on the deck of the bridge. And I laid there till 3 o'clock and had a shot - and I got about a bare half mile and I'm travelling in the dark - on the soft side of the road - you'd get off the metal you see, so your boots don't sound and I ran straight into these two gendarmes on push-bikes with no lights - Goddamn it. I remember that on the map there was this town - Verdun. It's on that river (the Weser) - I know when I wrote the account - I couldn't remember the name - I think it was on the junction of two rivers. They are big rivers you know - that's why they're on the map (Aller and the Weser) - I don't think I'd done more than about 3 nights out before I got grabbed the second time - I remember the little village - Emlinghausen was the name of the village - Magda was the boss - she was the daughter of the house - evidently the old man was dead and the boys were all away at the war - and she was the boss - of course, we didn't have much dealings with them - only once or twice we working with her cleaning or weeding crops - stickraben as they called it - which is a variety of cow turnip - that's what they used to feed the prisoners on. Two or three times we worked her, but she was a damn nice girl. She was boss of the farm - her mother was still alive. But as I said, like France, there were no bally isolated farms - they're all - I suppose for defence in the early days they'd build a farm altogether - the farmhouses - and the fields - you wouldn't know whose they were - but of course they did - the owners - they would probably be a mile or two mile away from home. And they'd have a field of spuds in. The grew a terrific lot of spuds - they lived on spuds - that was the staple diet in Germany during the war. The grew good crops too - I know we dug her - that one - it was only a very small village that one - there wouldn't have been a dozen houses in it - there may have been - I didn't stay very long there - I'd some with me bally (escape kit) pretty well prepared - and I'd had experience the first one - and I must have taken a good lot of tucker with me - because I know I didn't stay working long - only - I might have been - see otherwise you had nothing - which was the case in the big lager - you couldn't save anything - you ate all your tucker, because you had to to live - but I must have got a pretty good reserve in hand

because I know I didn't stay long - probably only a fortnight and I went - they made no - they didn't take much notice if a man went - they didn't come looking for you - they'd reckon you wouldn't get far. When you got grabbed they'd take you to a - Osnabruck was one place I went to - I forget where the other was - it was a fairly big town. And they sent a guard from Soltau to take you back and you'd go back there - I did 21 days solitary twice - you always went back to your head camp, to Soltau - it was only a temporary gaol - a wooden one - built outside the enclosure. It wasn't always secure from bally - I know this is the second time I'm doing it, no shave, you got a wash every third day, and you'd go out and get a feed of soup and whatever's on. But every other day - bread and water. The punishment is dark cells and bread and water. But you go out and go to the cookhouse to get your grub - your soup one time a Frenchman or Belgian - there'd all bustle around you yabbering to you, and one stuck - is sticking a - they had a very fine biscuit - almost like dried bread, but it was damn good - they'd be stuffing that into pocket when the guard wouldn't be looking. But one night at Soltau I was about half way through my sentence - and - night time - and the door of the clink opened and a voice said, "Wheeler?" and I said, "Yes" - and a parcel of bloody food came skittering across the floor - they'd evidently bribed the guards to send me this feed - some of the mates in the lager. The first time I was in gaol I used to recite Henry Lawson and Adam Lindsay Gordon - The poems I liked were mostly Lawson and Banjo Patterson's. I'd learnt them out on Yanco (?) that's the first station I'd gone to - North

49

Yanco - it's in the New South Wales Riverina - on the Murrumbidgee. That's where I had learnt them - because around the campfires - especially Saturday night there'd always be a little sing-song or tell stories or recite a poem - which put the night in. That's where I learnt them of course. Now I've forgotten them all. The one I liked best was "The cow, the cow, the cow" - that's Banjo Patterson's - and the boy that bally well - the old boy at the shanty - if you gave me a little time I'd probably think of those lines. I've never read them again since - and that's 80 years ago. I was 17 years of age when I went there - 17 to 19 years I spent there - they'd just come off a drought - his sheep had been away up where Canberra is today - on agistment - they called snow leases. They'd lease country there - and I know they had sheep away. He had a team which did nothing else but droving - he had 8 stations altogether, that old boy. Sir Sam McCaughey. I was with old George Billingham most of the time - now he was a pannikin boss of a sort - but he wasn't overseer - there was another man who was overseer. George Billingham I was with most of the time - he had his own offices and the droving plant - and he would shift sheep - you see there was Coonong - North Yarria and Coonong on the Lachlan - he used to shift - it was a breeding place - and he'd put a draft of a couple of hundred rams on the road too be delivered to different owners - so we'd go on the road with these. George Billingham - you'd call him a head drover, but there were that many pannikin bosses - he was a boss only one step up from the ranks that was all. I don't know why they called them pannikin bosses. But Stewart was the manager - that is, the real manager - he used to drive in a bally (buggy). There were not many cars at that time - old Sam did but not the manager - he had a sulky and a driver and horses - McNamara was the overseer - he used to ride round, he was overseer of everything - it was one of the most self sufficient properties I've ever seen in the west - he bred horses and mules, he bred rams - of course, there were a big lot of rams - they were for sale a lot - and they used to have a bally sheep man come round who was a sheep-classer you see - classes rams and sells off probably anything up to 1000. They introduced that wrinkly Vermont (?) - they've always - they're still in the bally Merino sheep yet - it's a beggar of a sheep to shear - the shearers always didn't like it. In the Heimat, In the Heimat - that was the German blasted army song - marching song. That was the second time I

was in the clink - it was a wooden gaol with a wooden floor - and about midnight I'd get because you couldn't sleep - you didn't know daylight from dark - but I would reckon - Oh it must be dark now - everyone will be asleep. Stamp up and down that bloody floor. In the Heimat In the Heimat where the Kaiser wears a kilt! That would bring them raving to the bloody door - Stop singing! Stop singing! They gave you two blankets, and I used to roll them very tight or fold them very tight and stand them - and that gave me about another 6 inches. And when the guard - they were generally old men - finished with further service - they'd open the door and see a man about 8 foot high and they'd chicken out. He'd come in with the intention of blowing you up - but he'd slam the door and go away. You'd stop for about an hour or so and then start again. I told them I was an opera singer. It was a soldier's marching song. That was the English version of it of course, where the Kaiser wears a kilt. Barbed-wire fever - there were cases of men who couldn't take it anymore - but I think they were queer in life anyway. Bloody well queer in life. The big lagers - they weren't so bad if you were an NCO - they were quite decent you know. But eventually they started putting us all away - when they finished with hospitals away over in the east at Stargard - this is a place I can't remember ever - the lager there - Schneidemuhl - but I'm doubtful about it. It was still in East Prussia. From what I can see of it - every province in Germany had its prisoner of war headquarters - like they might have had more - I think - like they had their armies. We argue in the Belgian hospitals - and there was a little German nurse there - oh she said - we shouldn't have been - she could speak English and speak it fairly well - we shouldn't have been in this war with Britain - they gathered every NCO that wasn't - see most of the NCO's would get into a job in the - and they were home and died. They would get a job and get their British parcels, and also they would control the whole of the British parcels coming into the district. But Soltau must have had probably a million POWs in it - they at the camp would be - they had a little cubicle of their own - which would contain about - the barracks were very long - some were two storey a couple of hundred men or more - and the other would.

(??)

They got us up pretty early in the lagers - you see they were only a holding camp - I knew Soltau the best - I got to know a few good Australians - I practically lived with them when I was in Soltau - and they lived well, because they were getting the best of the German food, and their own Red Cross parcels - and probably a few of others too. We had a parade in the morning - that was the work parade - you'd get a drink of coffee, as they called it - made from roasted bally rye or acorns and a chunk of bread - it was shocking bread - it was of course made from rye - and dark - it was almost black - and then you'd be called onto parade, and you'd be marched in squads within reach of marching distance and you'd spend all day there - and you practically got no dinner hour - they didn't give you a dinner hour - and then be marched back just before dusk and you'd get a bit of a feed at night-time - what they called soup - soup was made from stickruben and a bean that was powdered up - there was a greasiness in it - it was alright - but it was a pretty shocking bally thing to eat. They were a sort of something like a big swede-turnip - there's a cow turnip which they grow in England - you might grow them for cattle feed of a winter time - well they'd slice those up and preserve them in some way - just like - I think it must have been only salted water - and then - it had - there was no meat or anything in it - no fat - we were damn very short of fat. But these NCOs - there were three Australians who got in and ran practically the whole of the camp at Soltau - that is - a branch of it - that would be the English branch - then there'd be the French - the Belgians - and the Russians - the Russians of course predominated - they were in millions - although there must have been millions who died of starvation - Germany worked them to death. But they were the men - I never thought to ask them afterwards - that threw

that bally great parcel of food in to me when I was in Soltau clink. The other lager - now was a little lager known as a strafelager - that must have been my first or second attempt - Grossenwiedermoor and I did my 21 days there - there you'd be let out into the cookhouse to get your soup - your bowl of soup - the Frenchman and Belgians that were cooks would all be bustling around stirring the burgoo for you - and another one would be sticking a bally biscuit into your pocket - there was never a time - it had a bad name Grossenwiedermoor - I did me 21 days there and only one time did a podgy looking bloody German - a feldwebel - come to the door with the idea I think of giving me a hammering - and I met him at the door - posed like a bloody boxer - he had a look at me and thought better of it! I was 6'2" - anyway - another time they took me out - a man unshaven he looked a bloody sight - like a gorilla - and they were asking me questions you see, and one bird rushes me as though he had the idea of - I naturally got up - stood up quite prepared to meet him - this close just like you'd meet any (boxer) and so I - and the other all laughed when he propped (?) - I heard them saying "He's a boxer". And they laughed and the other bloke drew back - the Germans - see this was in the guardhouse - their room in the guardhouse - the office of the guardroom. I heard afterwards that this little feldwebel - that he used to go in - they wore a long bayonet - they were almost like an officer in our army - the feldwebel - there were two ranks - and he used to go in and hammer the prisoners with this long thin sword he had. I think he came in with the idea of paying attention to me - and I heard him open the door, and I was standing there ready to meet him. He had a good look at me, and then thought better of it - and closed the door and went away.

I think I must have been at Schneidemuhl the first Christmas - after Christmas - they collected all the NCO's and I went off - British I should say and gathered us together - there must have been nearly 100 or more and they put us on a train

and they sent us right back across Germany to a little place - it was only a small lager - and there were 800 British NCO's in it - and it was from that I made my first attempts to get out - Hestinmoor. It wouldn't have held more than - they were living like fighting cocks - they used to get the German rations and use the best of it, and there own parcels - they were doing well - and a parade of a morning - I don't think there was one in the afternoon too - I think only the one of a morning - early - and if your numbers were right - right. I remember one morning - I'd not been long there - and there were two Englishmen bedraggled looking and unshaven were brought out and stood in front of us - Mr. Something and Mr. Cook - and this old commandant says - they'd had a go to get away from somewhere - and he said Mr. Cook and Mr. So-and-So have been on a journey. He said, They've come back to stay with us again. 21 days dark cells and bread and water. The cells were black - you couldn't see anything - there were practically no windows in it - they were evidently a fair size - among a lot of other buildings you wouldn't notice the actual size you see. But there was a corridor and quite a few cells - I would think it would hold anything to 20 or 30 or 40 prisoners - the gaols. It was all temporary war job - the whole Soltau itself was a temporary barracks - mostly French English and Belgians - there were a good lot of Russians, but the Russians they mainly kept over on the Schneidemuhl side. We used to escape in the uniform which we had got from the Red Cross - it was a dark, almost black, navy blue with a brown stripe down the strides about an inch and a half wide and a chocolate or yellow band on the arm - the yellow was evidently a British idea. They were well made, made by army contractors - I know mine fitted me fairly well - and then when they'd get them - there'd be tailors in the lager - they'd make them in to a smart looking uniform. What I used to do was sew that bloody chocolate stripe right over, and cover a bit of cloth over the arm band - but I know the first time I was grabbed - they put me in and started to search me - they ran the knife - they could see the stitching around this armband, and they soon reached the dark bit of

cloth I'd sewed over - of course if you had been caught in civilian clothes you could have got a nasty - you were still in your uniform although hidden. They had a special war issue paper money and coins. It was really only - the local stores would take it - but it was only negotiable in Germany - I think it had on it Kriegsgefangen - I had carried some of it for a long long while - and then there was a big drought - I had to leave Corrie - I got off Corrie 5 years - and I packed a lot of personal things away in a big case and a tin trunk - see Corrie only had an old hut on it and it was wide open - the army uniform and a few things like that - it's an old mining town - Selwyn - a big mining town closed down - it was a town of 5 hotels and 3 or 4 thousand people - for safe keeping I took them into a store I was dealing with - this big case of personal things - and it went up (caught fire). The only photos I'd ever had taken - I had done service with the Light Horse - on Yanco I did join a Light Horse regiment. Some of the men used to make the prison uniform almost like the officer's tunic. There were good tailors amongst the English army - they would cut them and fit them. They would be smart looking uniforms. The only bit of visiting I knew that you would do - Sunday - but I didn't stay long at Hestonmoor - but Sunday, if you had a good easy guard, you'd walk to the next village and meet a few of your friends and have a yarn there and then go back on time. I know there were quite a lot of them did that, but I never bothered because damn it I had one thing in view and that was to get out - and that's what I did. Mostly it was pretty poor until you got those English parcels - you were hungry and God knows - I know for 8 months I was a bedraggled looking bastard then. In the hospitals the only difference they made between the hospital tucker was very little - only thing is they (the Germans) got more. I know at Mons they were getting practically the same bally tucker as we were getting - that's in hospital - but not in the lager - it was starvation - there were thousands of blasted poor Russians died. But I have never forgotten that Russian doctor after they'd done their rounds he'd come back and sit on the bed and yarn to us - he could speak English well - I remember he told us "There's a million working

for Germany, there's a million in hospital dying, and there's a million (out there) pointing to this great cemetery. I'm very hazy about - Stargard was the name of the city it was at - I remember that quite well - the lager I've never been sure of. We were in a hospital - not Stargard - not in this big hospital - for a short while, and then we got moved to this big new hospital. It was a very big new one - 5 storey high and that's where the Swiss people came and took your name and number - that was well down in 1917 - that must have been nearly November or December - I'd been then 4 months. Once you went to a bally - this was what I was surprised about - there reason for collecting this hoard of English NCO's - there must have been quite a few hundred - sent right across Germany - Soltau is in Westphalia. They were a surprising people - and the soldiers - they might have been getting ample - but By God it was poor tucker they were getting - that bloody black bread. The farmer - that's why you could save your rations - he did a lot of thieving of the ration-controllers - Magda used to hide potatoes - I know at Emlinghausen Magda got us to dig a great hole - twenty yards long by six foot wide - trench - filled it with spuds - covered them with a about a foot of soil and put earth on top - you could drive over it and you wouldn't know anything was there. A chicken - mum or at least the cook, would get a litter of chickens - wait till they'd grown up - some of the older chooks would go and be eaten but they still had their numbers when the controllers came - same with the pigs - when the sows would have a litter - and on the farms they would have - the whole of the farming homes are built in a sort of hollow square - a wall there - a centre there - another wall there - and a gate way into a courtyard that's paved. In winter time they got straw they had kept and they put it into the cow bails and not every day, but pretty frequently because I never got on that job, they would clean it out and hose it down and let it run into this great cess pool in the centre - all the rubbish from the kitchen would go there, but it was cold and frozen - it didn't smell

- but in the summer time it would all dug out and dumped in layers all over a field they were going to plant - they'd rake it over the fields and then plough it in - that was the manure they got. The kitchen opened right into the dairy, and it wasn't a bad job the dairying job - there were that many cattle and horses in it - practically everything was yarded, and they would make the place quite warm. I know from outside I walked around those bloody places trying to find a break-in - to save going through the gate - well there'd be two or three dogs there inside that bally square - they wouldn't come out chasing you, but as soon as they got the sniff of your wet clothes - I was looking for a tool that would lever those staples out of that damn boat that night. I've often thought I'd have done better if I had of - some of the rivers further back - taken to the river boats - I reckon I'd have done better. I thought when I found this boat - the Germans must be all dishonest people - they lock their boats up of a night - it was a thing unheard of in Australia. You were lucky to have stripes, because they got some pretty terrible bloody jobs down salt mines and God know what. They would be mostly 4th Brigade men who were taken that morning - because I can remember quite well the 12th Brigade going out. They were in a position - evidently not much machine-gun fire to stop them - because I saw it all - they got down to that road that I mentioned - there was a cross road there - there was like a valley - from Riencourt - they were on a ridge - and so was Bullecourt - like the valley in between, and if I'd have done the right thing - if we could have stayed in our right position instead well over 100 yards from where we hit the barbed wire - I remember once - I left the lads and running up to Captain of A Company - I told him, "Look there's a break Sir. I said that's where we can get through". And then I went back to the lads and brought them back - and we were fools - it was stupid thing to do, because the barbed wire - if we couldn't have found an opening - we'd have been outside the bloody barbed wire and safe - once you were inside - like the barbed wire - there was only this opening and it must have been under cover by about half a dozen bloody machine- guns - somewhere about 10 o'clock I saw some of the lads - I was back up the line a bit - this is after I saw Emerson - sitting in a corner - he was unconcerned. He was sitting in a corner chewing - he'd opened his tin of bully beef and was eating it - I said, "How's it going Charlie" oh he said, "Not bad" and I said, "Aren't you in this?" "Oh" he said, I'm going to call it a day, Jim". I didn't know what he meant - anyway I didn't stop - I had picked up a few bally wounded men in dugouts and then went back to my possie - I think they called that communication sap - it was coming in obliquely from Riencourt - Emu Graben - that I think was German for trench. The wire was pretty well broken - like where we went to was on the crest of the rise, and it was pretty well broken - the guns had done a good job, but we should have had more than one you see the thing is for a mile on either side it was the only opening in the wire the other one was over where the 12th was. And there were no more - and there must have been half-a-dozen machine guns in that village - because I heard the roar of rifle fire - to hear the rifle - you didn't hear much of it in France - not like the Peninsula - any action there was always heavy rifle fire, but when I looked out there were about half a dozen of our lads trying to get back through this gap - a few of them got through - but most of them got killed. But they didn't get far because they got outside the barbed wire, but the Germans collected them after the battle was well and truly lost. I don't know how Bean came to make that mistake, but it was a well known fact that the 4th Brigade was still fighting when the 12th Brigade got out - they went out in a mob - they went up in artillery formation - and it was one of the best sights I reckon I saw in the whole of the war - the steady advance of that Brigade and broad daylight! Broad daylight! I heard the roar of rifle fire as well - there must have been a good lot of troops in that Riencourt - and I looked up and here's the bloody - there's a Lewis gunner near me - not one of ours - he was a 14th man - I said, "Look - get onto those bastards" - we could see their bloody helmets and faces above their trench - and they were firing - it wouldn't be far - be a bare half mile, and the smoking tanks - on fire - and half a mile away the 12th Brigade coming out. They got out with -

of course I was very disappointed with the 4th that day - I was very disappointed - they threw it in too early - I think all the leaders - most of the good leaders of the 15th and 16th - there was a good team of leaders in the 14th - those Captains - and in the 15th and 16th we had some very good men - they must have got killed in the charge I think - I was no where near them when that happened - I was well down on the left - very few men - a few 14th - I didn't have any right to take them - but there were only 3 of my old team left - evidently the others had been hit coming through - I said, "Come on - we'll go on" I know I was looking over to the trench at them - "Come on" I said, "We'll go up". I remember one chap - this chap yelled - he jumped up, and he said "Come on 15th!" and away we went - Dunworth - that's the man I was trying to think of - he was wounded by then, because later I saw him in a dugout - I went hunting two or three trips - I had two or three trips up that line - hunting up bombs - and God I've never forgotten that sight - that was the trouble - they only had light field guns there - the big guns hadn't got up - but they'd made a good job of that - now the first thin that came over was the plane - we were finished by then - that would be about 9 o'clock in the morning - it was still a hazy morning - this plane came over and came along the line and had a look - but they had a system instead of contacting the Brigade that was in the firing line - old Brand - they used to send it back to 5th Army - the result was when the army thought it over - they did nothing about it - and then the next thing - the bally Light Horsemen appeared - they all came about 10 o'clock in the morning - you know a good sharp barrage we would have had a chance to - we wanted a smokescreen to get out! That's what we were wanting - we knew we were beaten then - with no bombs - about 10 o'clock - we were well and truly beaten - I know I held those two till the bloody last. We wanted a bloody barrage so that we could make a gap through that gap in the wire. By then it was getting on for 10 or 11 o'clock and pretty soon afterwards - the 12th - they got down - the bombers - the first line of bombers - and the same thing happened - they got right down to that road that I got to - that crossed the trenches. There was no trench you see - where the road crossed - Central Road - I think two roads crossed somewhere there. But I got down there - that was very early in the piece - and I should have stayed there - I was sorry I went

54

back. But I was only carrying a very few bombs and I had no- one with me, so I went back. Again if I could have stayed there I would have stopped them reinforcing the German front line and probably saved a lot of the 12th Brigade if I'd have stayed there - they got down to it because we could see bombing up towards the village - you could see the Mills explosions in the trench, and the bombers were bombing towards us. But instead of the 15th being in numbers on the left flank - there was nobody there but my bloody self! But the gap was far too wide. Too many bloody flanks - there should not have been a flank there at all - the 12th (and the 4th) should have been jolly well married before they - although they - we went at 4 o'clock - they didn't go till 8 - after daylight they went. They were only over there 2 hours - they went over through that damn bloody - not much shellfire - but a damn lot of bloody rifle and machine gun fire and we could see the whole lot. When we were coming over (the 4th Brigade) there was a bit of shellfire and I know I looked over once and I could see the whole outlay of the brigade right across the ridge - this shell - evidently a fairly big one - it lit up the whole of the bloody battlefield and I looked over and saw them - they were in their lines - as they were supposed to be - 13th -14th -15th and 16th behind them.

Humphries - again - I had very little of A Company - we were camped in a road near a little village called Favreuil - now it was a long way behind the line - 8 miles. We went up - just before dark - but it was dark when we got up near the line - the 16th

would be in line with us - far over to the right - but the 13th and 14th they would be in position on this - there was a railway and a sunken road - no trenches had been dug. This railway and the sunken road was our jumping off spot - well we A Company hit it just near where the road and the rail practically joined or crossed, and the rail embankment was only a couple of feet high - I don't know what time it would be - but some time about 10 or 11 o'clock we moved out - the 13th and 14th had gone and were in position - they were laying out then on the approach 1200 yards across it - they were laying out when we got there - they'd gone fairly early in the night - all in the dark - we went out to get into position which would be about 100 yards behind the 13th and 14th - I think we were behind the 14th. And we laid out there for quite a while - hours - bloody hours - no tanks - no tanks. The night passed and we were still - there was snow on the ground and it was damned cold - I remember it was very very cold night - or by now morning - and before daylight - and we stayed there until about 8 o'clock - well it's only starting to get daylight there in the winter - and the order came back "Every man for himself. Get back the best you can". "Come on" I said to the lads - "Get moving - don't look back", I said. We got to the railway line and there's no-one in yet, we were the first into it and over and on beyond, and I might have been about 200 yards over the line when I looked back and there's a bloody snow-storm over the German line coming towards us. Well that's what stopped - they'd had a whole brigade for a target for about half an hour - and not a shot fired at us - we got back without a shot fired at us. We got back -and we had a long way to go - we got back in two or threes - some of them didn't get back until 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon - we got one hot meal dished up that was cold by the time we got it - we naturally thought - oh damn it - the stunt would be off - No, 5 o'clock came and they said "Get Ready, we're going up" -it was then that young Humphries shot himself through the foot. Now he was an original (not able to be verified - probably 3rd or 4th reinforcement). He'd gone through the Peninsula and all through Mouquet Farm, but he wasn't going to have any more. I never heard of him again. He'd be treated like any other wounded - he would go back. I believe they used to put SIW on your bloody medical card

END OF TAPE SIX

They called them stickruben in that country - and that's what you'd mostly get in those camps - stickruben and bean soup - and goddamn it - horrible bally muck it was too - black bread - the bread was - they used to mill the whole - the straw and all with the (wheat) take the head of the grain - husk and all - and grind it and turn it into bread - so you were getting half straw instead of grain. They (should be - there) were damn nice people. I remember that hospital nurse - she was arguing with some of the (hospital staff) - that was in Mons - and she was a Saxon - and she and another orderly of some sort were arguing a point - and she said, "We Saxons shouldn't have been with you in this war. We are English", she said. Damn nice girl she was.

Mother was alive and there were three sisters. Although I went back twice, Dad had married again and we were damn well unwanted. She had two boys by the Dad - and they got everything - we got nothing out of Dad's estate, and it was a big one. It was valued at 30,000 when the break came - 3 properties at the head of the Narrabeen Lakes. It was my first ambition - to get 30,000 quid and go and buy it - because it must have brought a fortune - when I went down last in the 40's to see if I could raise a few quid after the drought, Sydney had grown right to its backdoor - it was a mile from the gates to the homestead. A lot of land - 640 acres. The other was across the creek - it was known as Herrings - and the other adjoined Herrings - it never had a name bar we knew it as Middle Creek.

We could write home and receive letters while a POW - but they were censored by both people. I think you were allowed about one letter a month - or a postcard so often. One letter a month I think was all you were allowed. But they'd be a long while coming. I know I got mail in Germany still addressed to the Peninsula - nearly two years afterwards. I got into strife over it - the letters coming were addressed to Private Wheeler - and I had my Corporal's stripes up. Now why they made a song and dance of it - there was an exchange of prisoners - NCOs and amongst half of them were British NCO's and they counted up - and half of them were privates who had put those stripes up themselves - so whatever the number was - they asked Germany - they wanted another hundred or another fifty men they said, "Oh these men are not corporals. They are trying to escape by putting something over you." From then on the Germans - they called me up two or three times - what do you say to this - I know one letter was 18 months old. Still private. It was a long while - 8 or 10 months before I could get news back to my family (not true). First the stay in Douai - and then the stay in Mons - they were a fair time - and then it wasn't until I got to this - I'm not too sure whether this hospital was in Stargard - the town - or whether it was in some smaller village - Stargard of course is a pretty big town in Prussia. They said - by this time anyway - it's close on Christmas - when I went into the Stargard lager, but it was when we were in this hospital - it was practically run by doctors and they put us through the Swiss Red Cross - it was not until 1918 some time before my first parcels caught up with me - they were a clothing parcel - you got a brand new suit - a very very dark navy blue, with a chocolate or yellow band down them - mine was chocolate. Of course we used to get another piece of cloth and sew it write over the band - and the trousers were very wide - and we used to pull the seams together and sew it to hide the band. You looked like a civilian I forget when the Red Cross came - there were about 30 British - there weren't many Australians in it - and we got badly treated when we went to the lager the lager was crowded, and we were given - instead of getting a place in a bunk - we were put out in the middle on stretchers - they had a reserve of British food there - tons of it - stacked in - and they called it the Liebesgarben - the love-gift or something in German - and when we got to here of it - I and a couple more - there was a committee there - all British NCOs - in every big camp every barracks would have a committee - of course, being British - they were all separate - British, Russians, French. All separate - very rarely would there be any mixture. So - I said to young Wally, he was a Yorkshire boy, I went and saw them after the war. They were in the wool industry - that's what I went there for - to pick up a bit of wool from the English side - Harrison - Wally Harrison, I said, "We'll go an breast (?) these bloody British bloody NCOs", and we put it on it - "Oh yes, there is food there" - and I said, "There's a damn lot of it there!" I said,

"These 30 men are all sick men." They looked wretched too. I know I was as hungry as a hawk all the time, and as lean as a crow. And I said, "I think it's time you gave us something". Oh yes, they quite agreed - the key was in the Germans' hands so they went and got it, and they came and dolled us out a few biscuits and tins of something else. And I said, "Is that all we're going to get". "Yes he said, "And you're lucky to get that". And I said, "Goddamn it", I said, "But I said here (that the men were sick)". I said, "What are you holding it for". Oh it's held here in case we go short of parcels, and it's there to give out. Well I said, look these poor birds haven't had a feed for 8 months". Of course, I didn't know their history, but I knew mine - 8 months starvation. And I said, "Goddamn it!" But they wouldn't give. Anyway, I called a meeting of the boys, and I said, "Look we'll bluff these birds into something. We'll get the German interpreter and tell him what we think of it. Of course, that was the last thing these boys wanted, you know - that this thing would get home to the British Red Cross. They stilled doled it out very slowly - I don't think I got a parcel until I got back, and I think it must have been about February - we left there - and there were 800 there (in Hestinmoor) - I don't know how many came from Stargard - but they

collected all the spare British NCOs and sent them back to Soltau. I had two or three months there prior to Christmas - until this contingent of NCOs went away. This food was in bulk - they weren't in parcels - there'd be a case of biscuits or a case of tinned meat, but they were going to keep that reserve until they went hungry - through a failure of mails or anything. They weren't going to give anything out. I don't think I got a parcel until I got back to Soltau - we arrived in Soltau - that is the big lager - it was the administrative centre for the whole of Westphalia (Hannover). Then we were sent to an all British camp - 800 NCOs there - a place called Hestinmoor. We went there - I remember a couple of English took me in and were tuckering me - they were sharing their parcels with me - and with the aid of the German food - things started to look up you see. Young Wally and I had mated up - and there were two British NCOs they were mates sharing their parcels - so they invited us to come - and that put 4 on two parcels - of course, we had to eat a fair bit of German food, like because the parcels wouldn't go around 4. But sometimes - that must have been in February I think - before I got a parcel. Amongst the first things that would arrive were three or four great parcels - an overcoat, a suit, boots, and underclothes. There might have been two coats for the ordinary suit but there was certainly two of underclothing - long johns and singlets and flannel shirts - there were certainly two of those. I don't remember the list - but I know they were the first things which came with your first parcel. By God - (it was a pleasant surprise). You were in old clothes that's you'd been wearing 8 months - still in uniform - I'd been wearing it 8 months - it was pretty bally grubby by then, and no change of underclothing, you just had what you stood up in. It was bally tough. But I've never forgotten those damn Englishmen. By God, if I'd have been well I'd have pulled their bloody nose. Yes Goddamn it - to think they wouldn't - there were 30 altogether in the party - practically the whole lot would have come from Mons - oh one was held, he was a TB case I think, and he got sent to Switzerland. The Germans were very scared of it. That's what they were scared of with me. Once that blood from the lungs - that was what they were scared of - that's why I got sent across to Prussia - I'd have probably been put into a working camp if I'd have only been crook from a shell explosion. But that blood from your sputum that scared them. But I've never forgiven those Pommie bastards. A man too sick really to fight for what was really his, you know. And the men I had with me were a pretty gutless lot. They were all Pommies - young Wally was a very small little man - he was a very nice little lad - I met them and their family after the war - I went up to Bradford to see them. They came from just out of Bradford - Walsall. It's all wool - but they know it as the West Riding. It's a town quite a big town too.

I went and thanked the lady was in charge - it was an Australian woman - the Australians - your Red Cross parcels - it was all Australian Red Cross - all the foodstuff - I went and thanked her personally. She had a big office in London - I just went up and asked to see the boss, and was introduced to her - I had about an hour with her - talking over experiences, and told her that her donations were never more happily received than mine anyway. The first the clothes - and there were a couple of food parcels - you see they had been gathering up a long while because my name had gone in about October - November, and this was bally well February - 5 months. The big parcels of clothing - a beautiful big overcoat, especially the clean underclothes - mine were ragged I know, and grubby looking. I must have looked a scarecrow - it makes a difference. You see these Englishmen, these NCOs - with their tailor made bally prisoners of war uniform on - and they looked very damn smart, of course - polished boots, and we in our ragged old khaki, which had the backside out of them and God knows what, down at heel boots - unwashed, unshaven, a pair of boots that hadn't seen the blacking brush for six months. You looked a damn wreck. I know two or three times - it may have been at Schneidemuhl - a German came to examine us - and I said "Englander", and he didn't believe me - I was so bally badly dressed and grubby looking - probably unshaven - I looked like a

Russian. When I said Englander - I said "Alles Englander". They had a liking for the English - but God, they hated the Russians - they feared them as well you know. And they hated the French too - but if they did have favourites - we were their favourites. It was a bally long way across - we were in the train for a few days - wartime traffic through Germany was slow. You'd get in a train and you might be days doing the journey. I didn't see much of the hunting lodge (in the forest while escaping) - once you got in it. Now the fence was built of steel mesh - the fence. It was a good six or seven feet high, and I said, when I'd had a look at the fence and the timber, I said damn it, this must be something. Anyway the boots would go into the mesh, and it was built of steel - you could climb it easily - I dropped on the other side - it's dark when I got to it - and I'm still wondering what it is - and as I got into it - I could cut stock tracks - and I found some dung - and looked at the tracks again - and I could see they were deer. So I was practically all the night crossing it - so at least that would be 10 miles, and in morning I came out on a clearing and there were a big lot of buildings there - and there's smoke rising from the chimney, so I tipped it then that it was some sort of shooting lodge. I thought now there might only be a caretaker there, seeing it's wartime, but I got up - it was in a pretty big clearing - and I said, damn it - I'll get up as close as I can and watch it for a while - this will be an old boy that's the caretaker - so I have nothing much to be afraid of - like if he was caretaker. And I stayed there for about 4 or 5 hours, and nobody appeared at all, so I crept up to the bloody building - and then the dogs started barking - so I skeddaddled back to where I had been and waited there until dark, when I thought, damn it - I'm not going to spend another night here - so I went and - there was a big double gate coming into it which were wide open - so I shot through it like a (hare) - and I'm on a damn good road, but still in forest. I travelled all that damn night - which would be 15 to 20 miles still in forest, because it wasn't part of this deer park - see, I thought I might get a hot drink of coffee and a bloody reindeer steak. Dogs were nearly always the trouble - when I was hunting up those farms for a tool to break the staples of those boats - it was the dogs which always put you away. I didn't get very far. You see - these rivers - the Ems flows into Holland - the other big one it goes into the North Sea - and then there are two which go into the Baltic - there were four rivers - you see, when I got this good map - I marked those rivers as special obstacles - and the railways. I said they were special obstacles - but those rivers were obstacles - and bad ones. They proved my undoing every time anyway - these damn rivers. Of course I knew that - that's why I tried to get the boat - if I could have got a boat - I must have been on that bank - I was over two days there - I must have done about 20 miles of that river bank - only found one boat that I could use on my own - there were other bigger boats there but they would have needed crews aboard them - but this was only a boat about - a 14 foot skiff - and I reckoned - damn it - if I can get that - I had a choice - would I cross the river - or would I

58

go to sea in it - that was the choice. But I know - this is from Emlinghausen - 240 miles to Holland. That's where Magda was the bally boss. Scotty was doing a line with her, but he had no chance because a bally Russian was in before him. But there were a few stories told there - there was an Englishman who got on the farm - and put the girl up the duff. Then went back to England and drew his pay, and then went back to Germany and married her. I don't know how right it was. Some of the first prisoners taken at Mons - the Old Contemptibles. That was the four rivers - that's the only thing - Emden - it only finished up at one river - that was at Verdun. Usually you had a compass - but see the thing is - the sun rises in the east - if it's clear at all or cloudy - you get your easting and that gives you your west you see. If it was a sunny day at all. I had a good sense of direction in country - like I was naturally a good bushmen, you see I'd had plenty of experience of it in Australia. That was a damn

nice camp evidently a prisoner of war had camped there for some months - he'd made it bloody comfortable - this is the second escape - it was under a railway bridge - you know that cement approach - goes over it - it was anything from 15 to 20 feet high. But the bridge decking had kept it dry from all rain for a bloody long while, and under it he had gathered something like a bracken fern and bulrushes, and made a damn nice camp to sleep on - he'd gathered up quite a few nice stones and made a fire place. There was a flood rack there - that had been dry for a long while, and there was plenty of firewood - of course, I was completely wet of course when I found it - I'd just walked into the river. That's where I walked into the river. This land spit ran out nearly half way.

This is the second escape - I ran into the gendarmes on ~ over the Ems that time. That's the name of the river I've been trying to think of. It finishes up in two rivers, flowing south into German, but Verdun on I'm pretty certain it's only one river which flows into the Baltic. There's one river finishes in the North Sea. Of course, there were plenty of small creeks, but the Ems goes into Holland. I stayed in this camp over two days - I had to dry everything - you see it was bitterly cold (this must be the first escape). I had to get the clothes off anyway - of course, I carried a spare set especially for that reason - you'd carry about 4 pairs of socks in case you got wet - a lot of German country is marshy and you'd walk into it. The first thing you'd know you'd be over your ankle tops in water - so if you could you kept to a road or a railway. It was a railway I was on one night and I thought - damn it - I could see lights ahead of us - township. And I said - I'd better get around this - I stepped off the bridge (road) 3 or 4 steps and the water is over my boot-tops. A lot of the names of the places we did get at - Hestinmoor, you see or Grossenwiedermoor - those camps were all put out in the moor for a reason - so you couldn't get away easily - and they had good hunting if you did break away. Twice I did 21 dark cells and bread and water. The privates do 14. The difference was because you were an NCO - you should know better if you were an NCO, so you get 21 days. Of course, the war was over then (re Armistice) - we climbed the bloody whatsaname - there was an Englishman said, "I'd like to go with you" there were two Australians - one of them was coming with me. I said, "We'll have a go" - the shade on the fence from one of the latrines - that's the place we picked to go - climb the fence - we didn't have a pair of pliers or we'd have cut it and gone. But we climbed the fence - and the blasted thing creaked for a mile! You could hear the creaking of the bloody wire! This was in Hestinmoor - they hadn't sent me to - the second time - the war's over now - after November - and I got sick of being in the camp - He said, "When are you having your next go Jim?" He said, "I'd like to go with you". An Englishman - I didn't know him - but he said "Look I'd like to join the party too". And we waited for him a long time in the shade of the toilet block - and then I said, "Let's go" and that is where we lost it you see. The guard - it was only lightly guarded - he was probably coming - he'd heard the squarking of the wire. He ran up and stopped us - no time at all we were round and fronting the beat - and the old Commandant said - right - put them in the clink - we did about two days in the clink, and I thought - "Well damn it I said to Bill - they were only temporary buildings - wood you know. I said, "In the morning when the guard comes for breakfast - - they used to give you a mattress and two blankets of a night - I said throw the bloody mattress and blanket out into the hallway and say, damn it - the war's over - we're not going to stay in gaol. The old guard - he thought quite a while - oh yes, come and see the commandant - and we went over to see him - he was in the same building. He took it up - and I said, "The war's over, I said, "And we're not going to stay in gaol." And he thought for a while, and said "Oh Los Los" - he said "Back to the lager". What he reckoned was on - we were only going - see we didn't find our packages - he hadn't passed those over like we would have done otherwise. What he thought we did - we were only going to visit some of the village around - a few of the land told us they had been out after the war - but it must have been early December - they called us all up - and we were on a train - we went to a

railway station - it must have been Bremer or Bremerhaven - a British transport and a destroyer came in - the 800 who were in the camp - the whole lot were put on the train and gone. Now that was only a week or two after the war ended. I think we might have been at sea Christmas day - I've just forgotten. The boat was there and of course you could see the British flag flying on her - with the old British Ensign - the destroyer was laid right alongside her - and covered her - and some Frenchman thought - they were working - they dropped their tools and came tramping in - and the Russians - they saw them too - they dropped their tools and came galloping over too. But the Germans came after the Russians, the Frenchmen they let stay, but they took the Russians back. All 800 of us went aboard this transport - a lot of them had been in camp in Germany for over 4 years. It was nice to feel that North Sea underneath you. Of course they would have had to get clear of some of the German mines, and everything you know - she ran the harbour - it was Hamburg - going through the towns - they'd pull up at the towns - and we'd be allowed to get out and walk around - and of course the Germans there - to see 800 British soldiers - well-dressed and fat and good looking staggered them. They'd heard that Britain was starving from the U-Boats - yet now in front of their eyes - 800 British NCOs - all prisoners - and all looking in the pink of health. And all perfectly dressed. Another thing I noticed - all the streets - in Hamburg - it was one of the biggest shipping ports in Germany - grass had grown over the streets - but you'd look at the Germans - you'd pass them at many junctions, you know, and we'd be allowed to get out and walk around - and you'd see the Germans - the kids especially - spindle-legged - they had been starved. On their bloody black bread. Yes, these bally Froggies - it didn't take them long to see what it was - the British Union Jack at the mast, and the destroyer with the White Ensign - all her guns trained onto the shore. No shipping on it at all - they must have cleared it - to give them through-way - and in no-time at all - God it was quick - we were out to sea - it was only a short trip too -

I think about a couple of days too - we landed at somewhere in the North - at Ripon. We landed there and were met by a team of Englishmen - They said, "It's dinner-time soon - you'll get dinner, and you'll all be allotted a bunk, and in the morning we'll sort you out". And in the morning we were paraded, and all the Frenchman were put on the road evidently to some place down south of England - we were bally well next to go. There'd be quite a lot of us too. And the rest were Englishmen. Oh a few South Africans, a few Canadians - they were separated. And we were put on the rails and trained away to report at bally Horseferry Road. We were given money and ration tickets - unheard of in England! Ration tickets - you couldn't live without them. They were all given the - the Englishmen were scattered practically all over England to respective headquarters and they would deal with them they said. It was well organised. Oh they did take a story from quite a few of us. A British officer - he asked me to sit down and tell him how I got captured - I gave him a few lines and that was it. Godamn it - I said, It's still as stupid as ever, I said. Bloody one tank out of 16, and they sent it in. The horsemen - there was a full division of horsemen there - 13,00 men came up the rear - of course, they weren't in sight all the time. They were in what we knew as Noreuil valley. They weren't in sight until they hit the crest - I don't know whether that had a name, but they were on the battlefield - from point to point was 1200 yards. They had told us - and advised us - for two long years - you can't advance against a German trench line - you've got to be with

60

-in 250 yards and gunfire - now we're going out 1200 yards and no gunfire!
END OF TAPE SEVEN