

# L F GRANT'S DIARY 1916-1917

1916

- Dec 22 Left Parkestone 2am & crossed from Folkestone to Boulogne-up hill to camp.
- 23 By train from Boulogne to Calais. Stopped there Xmas Eve & Xmas Day.
- 26 Through St Omer to Bethune, arrived 12.30am.
- 28 Marched to Noyelles-stopped in huts.

1917

- Jan 1 In front line at Helluch, over tops of waders in communication trench.
- 5 Out to Central Keep in little dug-outs.
- 6 Bath at Vermelles. Afternoon sent on Bde. Bombing course. Slept at transport at Sailly Labourse. Mine close by bombed by aeroplane. Met Law.
- 7 Marched to Verguin-passing Jenkins, Brenton, Wilden & Chiza. Slept at Verguin in a loft reached by a ladder.
- 17 Back to battn, arrived 10.30pm & slept at H Q.
- 18 Joined Coy in front line-in same dug-out.
- 21 Out to Lancashire Trench-working parties. Continued frost since 14th Jan.
- 25 Went in to Reserve line, poor trench shelters to sleep in, only about 6 hours sleep in 4 days.
- 29 C. Coy raided German front line, bombed dug-outs & took 3 prisoners. Back again to Noyelles for 4 days. Still freezing hard.
- 30 Sgt Hunter missing. Went out on patrol with officer, both either killed or taken prisoner.
- Feb 2 Back to front line. In the saps.
- 6 Out to Junction Keep. Acting Orderly Sgt, walked miles warning working parties &c.
- 10 Return to front line re-organization of platoons. Moved to No. 3 platoon, 10 Section. In strong point.
- 15 Relieved by 21st Divn. Marched out to Benvry, slept in a loft.
- 16 Marched on through Bethune to L'Ecleme, sleeping in an old barn on straw. Very flat marshy country.
- 18 Sunday - Open air service,
- 19-24 Parades in morning. Afternoon running boxing &c.
- 28 Marched back to Bethune-in tobacco factory.
- Mch 1 To Mazingahe. 1 night in huts
- 2 To Maroc in cellars.
- 3 Loos Crosses-big dug-out under slag heap-electric light.
- 8 Front line on advanced sap.
- 13 Out to Les Brebis. Over the top & an unpleasant experience of falling into shell-holes.
- 19 Front line again-on short sap.
- 26 Back to slag heap.
- 30 Raid seen from top of crassier on guard.

Apr 1 Moved to Loos cellars-ration carrying to front line-  
 nasty bombing first night.  
 7 In Maroc cellars  
 13 To front line. Fritz evacuating. Hayes killed in  
 Loos.  
 14 To St. James Keep & from there to tunnel in support  
 to C Coy then attacking. Moved into German trenches  
 19 Relieved C Coy who had obtained their objective. Re-  
 lieved by D.L.I's 5am 20th.  
 20 Marched to Maroc & Philosophe. One lovely night be-  
 tween blankets.  
 21 Relieved Leicesters in front line at Halluch.  
 26 Relieved Y & L in village lines.  
 27 Went sick & sent to hospital. Walked to 18th F.A.-by  
 motor ambulance to 33rd C.C.S. Bethune & on to 58th  
 at Lilliers.  
 28 On hospital train to Boulogne No 7 C.C.  
 29 Bath & change. In Indian marquees, splendid camp.  
 May 8 Shifted to No 10 C.C. at Ecauville by motor bus  
 about 10 miles. New camp beside the sea.  
 24 By motor bus back to Base Details at Boulogne.  
 25 In charge of party of 40 going to Calais. Arrived  
 at camp about 9pm.  
 Jun 3 Sports on Calais sand.  
 7 Left Calais with draft of 8 for battn. Spent the  
 8 night at Etampes, leaving early next morning,  
 arriving Bethune 4pm. Spent night & next day with  
 the transport.  
 9 Rejoined Coy. in the line at Hay Alley.  
 12 Relieved & went out to Mazingahe huts arriving at  
 daybreak. Ord Sgt.  
 16 In line at Posen Alley.  
 19 Gas alarm, some strafing.  
 22 Sudden heavy bombardment at 3am and a German raiding  
 party came and collared about ten of us. Hurried  
 across No Man's Land and through the German tren-  
 ches. Marched through the rain to their Brigade  
 H.Q., photographed then on to Carvin where we were  
 questioned by a very decent English speaking  
 young German.  
 23 Moved by train to Douai, put with about 100 others  
 in a barracks full of Germans in a separate room  
 with 3 S.M.s, some Sgts & Cpls, mattresses to sleep  
 on. Supper-a dixie full of stewed barley & prunes.  
 24 Breakfast-Black bread & coffee. Dinner-Macaroni &  
 traces of meat. Tea-Bread coffee & a kind of jam.  
 Sunday-Inspection by commandant-an Oxford University  
 man. Found a volume in French of Caesar's Commentar-  
 ies and we have a pack of cards so that the long  
 hours pass. The men go out on working parties but  
 the full N.C.O's do not leave the barracks unfortun-  
 ately. The variety of head-gear is very funny. Just  
 a few have English caps, others have blue Kitchener  
 caps, others French cloth caps & some straw hats.

- Jun 24 Soap is almost unobtainable, 5 marks for a 2d tablet and it is difficult to get a share.
- 26 Breakfast seems to be always bread alone unless one has saved a little jam from tea. The bread wants some swallowing though it is not so bad and if cut very thin is tolerable. We are on the second floor & our windows look into the main barrack square. Yesterday evening all the boys began singing & went on from song to song for over an hour much to the astonishment of Fritz who stood & stared up at us - they cannot understand our cheerfulness. The French people make a fuss of the men who go out & give them eggs, cigarettes, cigars, bread & clothes but we N.C.O's miss all that through not going out. In my room there is a R.F.C. Sgt but he does not know Bernard. The Cpl. who first questioned me was a B.A. of Munich & had been a merchant at Hamburg. He said he preferred English manners & customs to those of Germany & said that there was too much of regulations & systems in Germany.
- 28 A fresh Sgt. came in last night & kept us awake for a long time with his quaint remarks. A party of 50 of the Yorks came in to-day.
- 29 I have been lucky enough to get on a draft going away to a camp in Germany to-day at 11am, 45 of us going.
- Jul 1 Arrived Dulmen camp after 40 hours journey. Rode to German border in two cattle trucks passing through Tournai to Brussels of which however we saw nothing as it was night. Then through Enghien & some fine scenery to Herbesthal on the border. Through France & Belgium it was quite a triumphal progress, people lining the rly & shouting & cheering especially at big stations where we stopped for shunting. As soon as the border was passed the change of reception was noticeable. At Herbesthal we were given a meal in the troops canteen and then got a passenger train at 5pm. We passed through Aachen a big town and Coln where we crossed the Rhine. Then through Dusseldorf & Duisburg to some town where we arrived about midnight and marched from there to the camp. We are 18 kms from Holland by crossing the Rhine or 30 kms by keeping on this side. There are 6000 interned in this camp. English, French, Belgians, Russians, Portuguese, coloured troops & some civilians. Also some R.N.A.S. officers. We are comfortably housed in huts fitted with two-storey beds-hammocks made of matting with a pillow & two blankets. The food is terrible & we live in hopes of receiving our first parcel in about 6 weeks but there is no work to do. Breakfast is at 5.30, generally coffee, dinner at 11.30, some thin vegetable stew & tea at 5.30, some more gruel. We get one small slice of bread per day.

- Jul 2 It is rumoured that we have taken Ostend and 12,000 & that the Germans have evacuated Lille. It is probably exaggerated but it will be interesting to check later on. The ground here is all sand & it is not bad to lie down on it & imagine oneself somewhere else but nevertheless the time seems everlasting. Still I think we shall be home by next Xmas. To-day we have each received a  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb packet of H & P's Campaign biscuits and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tin of sardines.
- 3 From what we hear from various sources the people of Germany must be suffering terribly from hunger for I do not think they receive any more than we do. Even the sentries here offer us a mark for two or three biscuits. To-day we received another packet of biscuits & a lb tin of jam between three. We are doing well it seems! We were vaccinated today. Some of the sentries look absolute wrecks, white faced boys who look as if they might collapse at any
- 4 minute. I doubt if the Germans can stand the strain of another winter on their present rations. After the war what I shall want will be not rest but a spell of hard work & exercise. We get too much rest here and can only wander about aimlessly for a few yards & look through the wire. One often thinks of the frontier but although it is only 30 kms it would require some reaching for anybody who cannot speak German fluently & then one would require a compass and no doubt the frontier is well guarded. The Germans took a full description of us yesterday, eyes, hair &c.
- 5 Yesterday we had an issue of 20 cigarettes and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb tin of cheese between three and to-day we received another packet of biscuits.
- 6 Last night we had to go to bathe from 9 to 12 and leave the hut empty and on our return found all our bread & biscuits cleared out and some shirts, money & watches taken. We suspected the French in the next hut & this morning when it was their turn for fumigation we searched their hut although they had left one man on guard. As a result we found a small part of the food and the majority of the other missing articles & reported it to the German authorities. All the same we only had coffee for breakfast & if the things had not been found the French would have found their hut ransacked. We were inoculated on Wednesday & again to-day.
- 10 To-day there were eight Russians buried & yesterday three British & one Russian. It seems to be chiefly English & Russians that succumb. The British, being the best fed normally presumably feel the deprivation the most, whereas the French are more accustomed to this kind of food. As for the Russians it seems probable that they are the cause of a great part of the disease in the camp for they are filthy



- wretches and prowl about the camp licking out old tins. Yet they are supposed to be fighting against Germany in the cause of civilization. Already one can see a difference in the faces of the men who came in with me, a falling in of the cheeks. It has not made much impression on me yet & I am thankful that I feel fairly well. There is not much hope for a man once he gets into hospital here.
- 13 Our fifth and last inoculation.
- 15 Attended a CE service in one of the huts conducted by a private, probably been a lay reader. He spoke on the chapter in which Elisha leads the Assyrians into the Israelites' hands. An interesting and thoughtful address. One hears from time to time horrible stories of the brutality of German guards towards British prisoners working behind the lines which contrast very much with our treatment at Douai. But after the war I think there will be more hostility between British & German civilians than between the men who have been actually fighting. The Germans in the trenches have suffered just the same as we have & we can respect them, but the German civilians have months of semi-starvation to embitter them against England and the English population will not soon forget the German air-raids.
- 18 We hear news of a Russian advance recapturing Lemberg & 100,000 prisoners & hope it may be true. Also a report that the Kaiser has been wounded. It is said that the Germans have made another big raid on London and we have raided Dusseldorf Essen Eberfeld and Ostend. Another 120 men arrived from Douai Monday.
- 26 One seems to grow more & more hungry every day presumably one's reserve is now about used up. It is very tantalising to see English Red Cross Society's biscuits being issued to the Russians while nothing comes for us. The French get their parcels through in about three weeks and all day long they are at the fire just outside our windows cooking semolina rice lentils and bacon &c.
- Aug 3 August has opened with wretchedly cold wet & stormy weather which looks very unpromising for the German harvest.
- 4 The third anniversary of our declaration of war finds the Germans flying their flag in celebration of a victory over the Russians, but we also have news of a British success on the La Bassee front.
- 5 We are under orders to leave at 5 o'clock to-morrow morning for an unknown destination. 26 N.C.Os all told.
- 6 Bank Holiday Monday, the German comes in to wake us at 3am and after breakfasting off cocoa we leave camp at 5 and arrive at Dulmen station just after six. There we have to wait until about 9 o'clock for

- Aug 6 our train, travelling in a passenger coach attached to the front of a long goods train. We journey through Munster to Osnabruck at which place we shunt backwards and forwards in the goods siding for about five hours and finally reach Lohne about 9pm, having covered about forty miles. Nothing to eat all day except a biscuit each which we were fortunate to receive from a Mons prisoner whom we encountered on the way. He also gave us a tin of brawn & one of pineapple but of course that did not go far among 26 of us. Only a mouthful of water all day. Shunting up & down at every station we passed through made the monotony of the journey intolerable. At Lohne we were hitched in rear of a passenger train and went through Minden to Hanover where we got out at 11.30pm. There we were surprised & delighted to hear that at last we were to have something to eat and
- 7 going down to a subway we enjoyed a substantial potted meat sandwich & coffee. We sat at the tables and tried to sleep until six the next morning when without any further meal we came on in another train about two hours journey to Celle and marched 5kms to the camp. The camp is quite a small one and first impressions have been unfavourable. In the first instance the German Sgt. Major is a bullying fellow which we soon found out. All cigarettes are confiscated and slit up before being issued to their owners & our cigarettes were all taken from us. Similarly with every tin article and altogether the outlook does not seem promising. We got no food here until three o'clock in the afternoon so that we felt just about done. We had to be fumigated before we were allowed out of the hut we were first put in & the German Sgt. Major made us put all sorts of things into the fumigator that were quite spoilt by it.
- 16 There is not much to record about this camp & what there is is not very pleasant. It is situated on a big open plain with thick woods in the distance. We go out every other day to dig up the roots of trees that have been burnt down and bring them back on a light railway. The object is supposed to be to provide fuel for the winter and this promises to be a terribly cold place in that season. At present hardly a day passes without a violent thunderstorm accompanied by vivid forked lightning & torrents of rain which comes down so suddenly that we often get caught at work. This camp is known as an N.C.O's punishment camp and it is not an unusual thing for one the guards to break the butt of his rifle on one of the prisoners. Out of the five or six hundred men here nearly two hundred are regulars captured in 1914 & most of them say this is the worst camp they have been in. It is not the amount of work we do as

Aug 16 we are only out from 8 to 11 and from 2 to 5 and not much exertion is put into it, but there are so many small annoyances. All the stuff arriving in parcels is emptied out of the tins so that a proportion of each tin is wasted and all the cigarettes are cut up for some senseless reason.

20 We hear from the German papers of the big offensive in Flanders and also of the push at Halluch & Loos, the old front line that I was on. It is hard to tell what degree of success we are having however as we have only German version & there are no fresh prisoners here to bring us news. All the same we feel very hopeful & try to read between the lines. Just at present there is a great deal of discussion in the camp regarding the rumoured exchange of prisoners but those most concerned (the 1914 men) are becoming rather sceptical at the absence of anything official. This week we have been reaping the benefit of the potato harvest as we get a good allowance of potatoes in the soup which makes it much more substantial.

27 Yesterday evening a meeting was held in one of the barrack rooms to start a Help Committee which should effect an improvement in the conditions of the camp.

Sep 3 Yesterday evening we had a concert in No 13 room, the artists being accompanied (more or less) by violins & mandolins.

5 Moved into No 9 room. Sleeping next to a pensioner of 56, a wonderfully active man & most interesting to converse with.

10 Have received much assistance from my bed fellow in food and clothes.

11 My first grocery parcel from Copenhagen has arrived at last and also a biscuit parcel. To-day a Zeppelin passed near the camp.

13 Copenhagen toilet parcel.

14 Second biscuit parcel from Copenhagen.

17 Received to-day my first letters from home, one from Eth, & one from Lizzie. Very pleased to hear that Bernard is alive as a prisoner in Germany. We have various occupations outside the camp now beside digging up the roots. There are 100 men go out on this job every day & bring in twelve truck loads of wood, morning and afternoon, which is stacked just outside the camp. Another task occupying the men is chopping and sawing up the roots ready for burning. We take it very easily, sit down to the saw and sometimes the amount of wood chopped does not exceed the amount brought into the camp for private use. One party is employed chopping the heather off the moor preparatory to digging and sowing crops of vegetables for the camp. To-day I was with the party raking up the chopped heather into heaps ready for carting. In the morning we worked for an hour in spasms and

- Sep 17 then rested behind a convenient heap. After dinner the total amount of work done by the thirty men might have been done by one man. We brought some science to aid in the construction of heaps and as a result turned out some very nice shelters so that when inside we were surrounded on three sides. One house was circular so that the occupants were quite closed in. The sentries were easygoing & occasionally one would throw a clod of dirt into one of the the heaps & watch results hidden behind another heap. Then there is the digging itself and one day I was out with a party with the wagon bringing in peat. Every afternoon the wagon goes down to the village to bring up parcels or any German food there may be.
- 24 Yesterday we had a jolly concert with a farce that screamingly funny.
- 27 The camp was visited today by the Genl. of the 10th Army Corps.
- 29 A meeting to prepare a list of complaints in readiness for the rumoured visit of the Holland ambassador.
- Oct 1 To-day being Hindenburg's birthday, the German flag was flying and there was no "arbeit".
- 8 To-day is my first birthday in Germany & I hope it may be the last. Pain and myself both received parcels to-day so that we were able to have quite a good feed. Pain's parcel supplied a gingerbread cake and mine contributed some chocolate.
- 9 About 1 o'clock this afternoon we were surprised by a visit from the Dutch Embassy, although for a fortnight previous we have had rumours of his coming to this camp. About an hour before his arrival the stoves in the barrack-rooms were fixed up & fires started. A programme of complaints has been prepared in view of his visit & it remains to be seen what will result from it. A meeting was held in the evening to hear the report of the delegates replies to our complaints.
- 13 The first result of the Delegates visit is the confiscation of our soup powders and Oxo &c which is seved up in the soup, certainly not a step forward from our point of view. In the evening the concert party presented a burlesque entitled "The Pick of Oakham" which was so successful that it was repeated the following evening.
- 27 Two men escaped yesterday evening, one from Room 7 & one from Room 8, their absence was not discovered until next morning at 8 o'clock roll call. Much to our surprise everything passed off quite quietly.
- 28 This morning, Sunday, we were on parade for over an hour while some of the rooms were being searched & tins &c confiscated. Whilst on parade I saw some smoke rising from Room 15 group and being unable to

- Oct 28 find the culprit made the room parade at three o'clock with bedding, bowls & spoons. There was an excellent concert in the evening, the sketch was "Blobbs Agency".
- 29 Sleet and snow has been falling from a leaden sky all day and it is beastly cold. About nine o'clock nine or ten Germans came into the room & we saw there was going to be a search. A good number of tins went west & things generally were turned topsy-turvy. Not having any contraband in my possession I had nothing to lose. As a result of the escape last Friday we now have a roll call in the rooms at 8.30pm.
- Nov 1 Yesterday there was a fancy-dress dance and some of the costumes, especially the ladies were surprisingly good. The principal colour was the red of the handkerchiefs sent out to us & they gave quite a Southern or gipsy appearance to the gathering. The hair was manufactured by unravelling string.
- 5 This morning a party of 50 was called out to go away to another camp and Pain was amongst them. They had about an hour to pack up & were then transferred to the next lager after fumigation went off early next morning. Pain had a good supply of food to take with him, tea, sugar, cocoa, biscuits, bacon, oatmeal & rice, enough to last him several weeks.
- 7 A party of 66 arrived here from another camp.
- 11 Concert party produced Pte Potts V.C. which was a great success. I took a small part as a soldier.
- 21 A very amusing afternoon having photographs taken of groups of concert artists. About fifty went out in costume to the great amusement of the camp & the Germans.
- 25 The sketch this week was "Ici on parle Francais".
- Dec 2 This month has begun with some rough weather and in two days there has been about six inches of snow accompanied by hard frost.
- 3 Some of the fellows made a slide which was gradually lengthened until it came into collision with the wire fence & when that was knocked down the Germans stepped in & stopped the play.
- 10 Yesterday evening two prisoners escaped about dusk and when most of the camp was at the concert S came in & ordered them all to fall in in the rooms for a roll-call. As a result of this escape the lights will be put out at 8pm and they will only be put on in the concert room on Sunday evenings.
- 12 This morning there was a search all through our barracks. When we went on parade we were sent to put on greatcoats and then we went into the room in batches of ten & all our belongings were turned topsy-turvy, but I don't think anything was found.

No 33185	Cpl. L. F. Grant
No 6 Section	No 6 Platoon
B Coy	8th Bedfords

235 Prospect Road  
Woodford Green

2 EFS Parcels

Sep	11	Copenhagen	biscuits	
	11		grocery A	
	13		toilet parcel	
	14		biscuits	
	25		grocery B	
	30	Direct	No 55	25/8/17
Oct	2	biscuits	No 5	
	6	Grocery	No 56	25/8

G P

Tin	Meat
	Milk (Copenhagen)
	Milk (condensed)
	Meat Extract
	Jam
	Meat Paste
	Milk
	Jam
	Marmite

L G

Butter
Meat
Meat Extract
Meat Paste
No 55
Dripping
Sardines
Rations
Baked Beans
Jam
Beef loaf
Small Milk
56
Small milk
Jam
Dripping
Corned beef
Cabbage
Cheese
Sardines
Rations

L/C D J Crowley 9783 E Coy 25th T.R. Battn Dovercourt  
 Mrs H. Nobbs 3 Raikes View Blackpool  
 P.O. P Brazier P Os Mess R.N. Air Stn, Pulham St. Mary Norfolk  
 Rev J. Varney 3 Kingsbury Cresc. Neasden Lane Willesden NW  
 L/C F.J. Raynham L. Signal Co R.E. c/o DDAS, 39742 BEF  
 G E Gould D Coy No 2 MGB CB Purbright Camp Surrey  
 R J Grant 28 Widdrington Rd Coventry  
 Sgt W Medhurst 8010 1st MG Cadet Corps Sgts Mess Bisley  
 C. W. Hollis  
 B Smith  
 H Smith RFC. St. Patricks Hall Reading  
 Mlle Adele Tacon, au mont sans pareil, Verguin pres Bethune,  
 Pas-de-Calais.

### Bickfords Time & Safety Fuse No 11 Mk 1

Outer covering of Insulation Tape. A covering of Gutta Percha. 2 layers of Flax. Slow burning powder. Burns 2 ins per 5 secs. Black, smooth.

### Instantaneous Fuse

Insulation Tape, Gutta Percha, 2 layers Flax, Waterproof tubing, quick match with air space. Burns 1000 ft per sec (Never used in grenades) Orange colour, rough with snake thread.

To test safety fuse. Time it and bend it to see if gutta percha is perished.

Ammonal-grey powder absorbs moisture & must therefore be kept dry.

Germans use Donerite	NH <sub>4</sub> NO <sub>3</sub>	65%
Belgians Sabulite	TNT	15%
	Al(filings)	17%
	Carbon	3%

DETONATOR Copper tube container F.O.M. Services No 8 Mk 7  
 2½ ins long (red) 30.8 grs No 6 Commercial (used in Mills bomb)

TRENCH CLEARING B1, B2, T1, C1, L RG1, RG2, T2, C2, S  
 B1 6 bombs, B2 6 bombs, 3 smoke bombs, T 12 bombs C, 18  
 Island traverse-bomb all round & on top.  
 Mills No. 5 No 6 Commercial detonator  
 No 3 Hales rifle grenade No 3 detonator (2 threads)  
 No 20 " improved same detonator  
 No 22 Newton (?)