

**The War Diaries of Francis James Whiting**  
**Diary 3**  
**June 4, 1916 to October 8, 1916**

**June 4**

*(This was apparently written later while he was in the rest camp)*

After getting to the dressing station I rested for a while before proceeding down to the ramparts<sup>1</sup> where the regiment was assembling. I was so dazed by the shell that had burst in front of me when getting out the wounded man that I was as dizzy as if I was drunk. However, [W. G.] [Elder](#) and I managed to stagger down to the dugouts under the ramparts. There Tom [Lilly](#) got us some tea and a good snort of rum, and found me a dry place to curl up in, as I had had no sleep for nearly three days. So exhausted [I] could not sleep. Got up again and found Corp. [John] [Jones](#) who gave me another good drink of rum. After that I believe I dozed for a while. Later got up and found nearly all my old chums had either been killed or wounded. Dunc Gray [Gay](#) died of wounds as [O. M.] [Hoggie](#) (since killed at Vimy Ridge) and [D. E. M.] [Donnelly](#) (since killed at Vimy Ridge) were bringing him out. Found bunch of the 49<sup>th</sup> who told me [Wilf] [Barker](#) had been wounded in the eye. About dark we fell in and marched back to a camp near Ouderdom. Slept like a top all night.

**June 5**

Yesterday I sent word to Uncle Will to cable home that I was safe. Rested all day.

**June 6**

Muster parade to find out who were missing and what the survivors knew of the casualties.

**June 7**

Am still weak from shock and nerves seem shaken.<sup>2</sup> Moved camp today and

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<sup>1</sup> The Ramparts were defensive fortifications around the city of Ypres. They were designed by the French military architect [Vauban](#) and characterised by a star-shaped layout with surrounding moats and canals. During World War I, the underground halls, passageways, and bunkers of the Ramparts were used by the Canadian forces as headquarters and rest stations for the common soldier. The [Ramparts, Ypres](#) is an artist's sketch of a section of the Ramparts in July 1916, when it was used as Canadian Brigade headquarters.

<sup>2</sup> Frank was apparently suffering from shell shock. For more information on this subject, go to [First World War.Com](#). At the bottom of the page, there is a link to a 1917 research paper by British wartime psychiatrist W. H. Rivers, who was deeply concerned about finding an effective treatment for the disorder. Entitled "The Repression of War Experiences," it provides details on the treatment programme that he developed, making it a must-read for anyone interested in the effect and treatment of frontline trauma in war time, shell shock then, post-traumatic stress disorder today.

Sergt. [J. Louis A.] [Robertson](#) (later killed) put me on blanket guard.<sup>3</sup> Walked part of way as far as Poperinghe and got a ride to Abiele [Abee/Abele].<sup>4</sup> Took my own time from there. Met Dick [Beaumont](#). He was tickled to death to see me. He was on frontier guard and missed the battle.<sup>5</sup> Got off the trail and had to spend the night at Hdq. along with [F. J.] [Crofts](#) (later killed) in the snipers.

### June 8

Found No. 2 company billeted in a barn in a fine peaceful part of the country. Good farmers live around here. [A. H.] [Buckland](#) (later wounded) and I walked down to Steenwoorde in the afternoon.

### June 9

Visited Steenwoorde again. Payed today. New drafts coming in from the 61<sup>st</sup>, 68<sup>th</sup> and several other Western Batts.

### June 10

Met a man named [A. E.] [Baldwin](#) (later wounded) who used to be station agent at Traynor since I was there. He came over with the 61<sup>st</sup> and is a draft to our company.<sup>6</sup>

### June 11

Church parade this morning. During the past 10 days the war has seemed to have wakened up. A huge naval battle was fought off the Shakeig [Skagerrak].<sup>7</sup> Both sides claiming victory. However the Germans have gone back to their holes again. The Russians have started a big offensive, and lastly the *Hampshire* was sunk with all hands including Lord Kitchener and his staff on their way to Russia.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A blanket guard was detailed to look after the blankets, which were essential to keeping soldiers warm on the battlefield, and therefore had to be protected from loss or theft. In a [narrative](#) about his war experiences, a British padre specifically mentioned an incident where “the blanket guard ran in shouting.” The meaning of that term “blanket guard” was clarified in his account of another incident. He wrote, “The men were getting their blankets rolled in bundles of ten. Four men had to fall in and take them to B.H.Q. [battalion headquarters]” ... [where] a man [was] detailed to watch the precious blankets.”

<sup>4</sup> Abele and Abee are right next to each other about half way between Poperinghe and Steenwoorde. The rest camp was “north of Steenwoorde” according to the PPCLI War Diary.

<sup>5</sup> Dick had more than one reason to be “tickled.” Had he been in the Battle of Sanctuary Woods, the odds are that he would have been killed.

<sup>6</sup> According to the [PPCLI War Diary](#) 279 men, including the 5<sup>th</sup> University Company, arrived on June 9, and 250 men from the 4<sup>th</sup> Division arrived on June 10, all of them replacements for those lost at the Battle of Sanctuary Wood. In a letter to his wife Mabel, dated Steenwoorde, 10 June 1916, Lieutenant-Colonel Agar [Adamson](#) wrote, “We, during the last 24 hours have received the following drafts, 24, 199, 80 and 253. Most of them a good lot, but sadly lacking in discipline and training.” See .N. M. Christie, ed., [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919: Lieutenant Colonel, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry](#), (Nepean, Ontario: CEF Books, 1997), 184.

<sup>7</sup> This was the Battle of Jutland. If you are interested in the largest sea battle in naval history, go to [Battle of Jutland, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1916, How and Why it Happened](#).

<sup>8</sup> For an account of Lord Kitchener’s death, go to [Guardian.co.uk](#).

The German offensive beyond Ypres has been effectively checked although they have won a considerable bit of ground at the point of the salient.<sup>9</sup>

### June 12

Company drill conducted by Hugh Carter (later killed) of the Gren. Guards.<sup>10</sup> Decent fellow but rotten stuff for old soldiers like me out for a rest. Rained this afternoon. Supposed to be a Battalion parade but rain stopped it. Slept gloriously until tea-time. Given a mill sack and [haversack](#) this afternoon. Getting my equipment gradually rounded up. Tonight wrote Aldine St., Ramsgate and Mrs. Giles. [A.] [Giles](#) is still missing (D[ied]. of W[ounds]). Held out little hope as it is a thousand to one the old fellow is dead.

### June 13

Rained all day. No parades. Letter from Vic [Lapp](#) (later missing) dated June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Afraid to accept invitation to Aldine St. Says he is shy. Wrote him tonight. Heard they wanted a runner from No. 9 so I volunteered and got the job.

### June 14

Attached to headquarters now. Am with [J.] [Davey](#) and we have to hang around the barn where we sleep so as to be immediately available in case here is a message to send to our O.C. Co [Officer commanding the Company].<sup>11</sup> Letter and pair of socks from Miss Spackman. Latter was very welcome it is such a long time since we had a bath.

### June 16

After noon we got off for a few hours and went with the cars to Steenwoorde when a vaudeville show was put on by a bunch of the boys. The stars of the show were Tom [Lilly](#)<sup>12</sup> and his men (4<sup>th</sup> McG).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed account of the Battle of Sanctuary Wood, especially the latter stages, see [Holding the Salient, 1916 – The Battle of Sanctuary Wood](#).

<sup>10</sup> This must have been the British 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Grenadier Guards, the oldest infantry battalion in the British army, which was formed in 1656 by King Charles II. The Canadian Grenadier Guards, the 87<sup>th</sup> Bn., did not arrive in France until 12 August 1916.

<sup>11</sup> Although Frank did not explain the appointment, he was now an orderly. There were two orderlies designated from each of the four companies and assigned to PPCLI headquarters.

<sup>12</sup> Frank mentioned Tom Lilly on June 4. He was the man who provided tea and rum to Frank and the other men who had just come in from the battlefield.

<sup>13</sup> This was probably the first performance of the PPCLI Comedy Company at the Town Hall, Steenvoorde in June 1916. It was organized by Captain H. E. [Pembroke](#), the Princess Pat's Paymaster, and was designed to boost morale, which was especially timely after the recent Battle of Sanctuary Wood. So successful was the company that it became a PPCLI institution for the balance of the war. "The Comedy Company performed throughout the base camps in France, and was the first France-based company to perform in London, where they played at the Apollo and St James Theatres. As well as providing a model for other companies to imitate, the Princess Patricia's officers themselves spread the concept as they were transferred to other units. The Woodpeckers of the 126th Company of the Canadian Forestry Corps were under the direction of Lieutenant Archer G. [Read](#), originally of the PPCLI, and the Dumbells Divisional

### June 17

Nearly broke again. Sent to Mr. Coffin a week or so ago for more money, awaiting goods daily. Rounded up some clean clothes today. Will try and scare up a bath tomorrow somehow. Great doings in the Company. [John] [Jones](#) (later killed) promoted to Serg., [A. A.] [Dove](#) (later killed) to Corp., [E. S.] [Bell](#) (later killed) one stripe, Johns [Jones?] two and [[J.K.](#) or perhaps [H.A.](#)] [Finlayson](#) (wounded) one.<sup>14</sup>

### June 18

Money came from Mr. Coffin today. Had a bath. Rumour that we are going back up the line again in a few days.

### June 19

Wrote to Harry [Beaumont] and [T. G. G.] [Ellis](#). Had quite a few messages today. Kept going pretty steady. Moving in a few days. Wrote to Miss Spackman.

### June 20

Busy again today. Sergts. Louis [Robertson](#), [D.] McLean [[Maclean](#)], [J. N.] [Edgar](#) and some others are getting commissions in the regiment.

### June 21

Moved in motor transports today out to B camp. Stayed there until 7 and then marched up to Ypres.<sup>15</sup>

### June 22

Allied plane brought down this morning. Very little carrying today. Boys out on fatigue tonight.

### June 24

Word came through that [T. G. G.] Ellis had died of wounds in Boulogne hospital. Wrote to his mother.

### June 25

Were to move to trenches tonight but move postponed. Heavy bombardment

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Officer was Lt Col A. Hamilton [Gault](#), formerly of the Princess Pats." For more information, see [The Canadian Concert Party in France](#). Also see Cook, [At the Sharp End](#), 399-403.

<sup>14</sup> "Johns" [Jones?] has not been identified. For information on the "stripes" associated with rank in WWI, see "Badges of Rank" in [Photo Forensics: Badges and Patches](#), as well as an [illustration](#) of the various stripes given to non-commissioned officers.

<sup>15</sup> The PPCLI was going into brigade reserve and providing work parties on the front line. In a letter to his wife Mabel, dated Ypres, 23 June 1916, Lieut.-Col. Agar [Adamson](#) wrote, "The Regiment the day before had been brought up from our last billets (17 miles) in the morning and that evening 1080 strong with 46 officers of sorts, marched to the Historic City and stowed themselves away in the cellars of the old Infantry Barracks..." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 189.

started and continued for two or three hours a little to the north of here.<sup>16</sup> Took a little scout around the city [Ypres] this morning. Found several delightful gardens and orchards. We, [[H.A.](#) or [J.W.](#)] **Grant** (wounded) and I were just starting on a nice cherry tree when Fritz opened up with shrapnel. We stuck it for a minute but the fragments began to come around uncomfortably close so we beat a glorious retreat, sheltering behind a wall or part of a building when we heard them coming. Soon the lanes and gardens were full of smoke but we got safely through eventually. Gathered quite a bit of stained glass from the cathedral. The roses are grand around here now. On walking about this place, it strikes me as a city of ghosts. Everything quiet and deserted with what is left of the houses standing like giant tombstones here and there.<sup>17</sup>

### **June 26**

Moved into trenches tonight 2 company are occupying a trench about 700 yards behind our old position in the appendix. No one knows where Fritz is but he certainly does not occupy the trenches he took on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Between our line and wherever the Germans are must be very unhealthy with unburied corpses. [[J.](#)] [Davey](#) and I are staying at Hdq, some distance behind 2.<sup>18</sup>

### **June 27**

Anniversary of Father and Mother's wedding day – 25 years. Brisk bombardment this morning. Only one casualty in 2 – [[J. K.](#)] [Finlayson](#) slightly wounded. Hdq. Lay low all day. Walked down and guided back a small party including [[J. K.](#)] [Finlayson](#) from front line.

### **June 28**

Very quiet all day at Hdq. Two trips down to 2 Co. during night. First trip went when it was still quite light. Fearful sights along the way. Equipment all over the place. Corpses still unburied from the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Stench awful in some places.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> According to the War Diary of the PPCLI, the move was "postponed twenty-four hours on account of a small bombing attack by the 42<sup>nd</sup> Bn. on the right of trenches," into an area thought to be held by the enemy, but in fact unoccupied.

<sup>17</sup> Frank would have recognised Ypres as portrayed in a 1916 [painting](#) of the city.

<sup>18</sup> Frank was indeed fortunate not to be on the firing line in view of his recent experiences at Sanctuary Wood. Certainly he admitted on July 1 to "feeling very blue these days," which the officer in charge may have identified as a residual effect of shell shock. Headquarters was "the cellar of a badly smashed house," and Frank was among the "8 orderlies, two from each Company in the line," who were stationed there temporarily. [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 190-191.

<sup>19</sup> On June 30, [Adamson](#) wrote, "This time last year, the Regiment was fighting on the same ground and we are constantly coming on graves of the old men. The condition and smell of the trenches beggars description. In clearing out the broken-in trenches and dugouts, we are constantly coming across poor chaps who in the last show [June 2] were buried by falling earth and sandbags, and every night the missing are being identified as dead." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 191.

## June 29

Very quiet all day. Shelling our path in the evening just before we went down.

## June 30

Quiet all day in our immed. neighbourhood but brisk bombardment along the line a little way. Moving back tonight.

## July 1

Camped in a camp near Ypres Road. Feeling very blue these days.<sup>20</sup>

## July 2

Walked down to Brand Nock [Brandhoek] with [F.T.] [Mabson](#) and [M.L.] [Hancock](#). Well filled military cemetery there.

## July 5

Brigade sports on today. British and French trying an advance between Ancre and Somme.<sup>21</sup> I fear the Germans now too strongly entrenched for a long continued success. They dig their machine guns in until they are almost level with the ground making it almost impossible to shell them out as they cannot be seen. Boxing bouts tonight. Very good showing.

## July 6

Applied for a pass to Poperinghe today but the orderly sergeant forgot it so I went down anyway. Took in pictures of Willard and Johnston fight. Suspect Jack of laying down.<sup>22</sup>

## July 7

Working as hard as usual dodging parades, etc.<sup>23</sup> More boxing tonight. Understand British losses down south have been terrific.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The scenes of the previous six days would have awakened awful memories of the battle on June 2-4.

<sup>21</sup> This was a reference to the Battle of the Somme, which commenced 1 July 1916.

<sup>22</sup> Boxing was popular at this time everywhere. Jack Johnson, a black American and defending champion, was defeated by Jess Willard, the white challenger, much to the delight of white supremacists everywhere. Frank thought Johnson may have thrown the fight, and although unlikely this was widely believed. For the history and a slideshow of the fight, see [Black vs. White: The Johnson Willard Story](#).

<sup>23</sup> There was plenty going on that Frank did not mention. On July 7, Lt.-Col. [Adamson](#) wrote, "A very long day yesterday training from early morning till 12:30 noon, then sports...I rode [Gault](#)'s horse who would insist upon bucking. Bartlett McLennan in the jumping contest was badly thrown, his horse falling on him and kicking him in the head. He is in a dangerous condition today, the competition was then called off ... At seven o'clock we put the review on for the R.C.R. and 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Staff, 1200 getting into one tent, a 3 mile march ... At midnight we did our night attack lasting till early this morning. We had real trenches and real wire, which had to be cut, Verey lights and dummy bombs. The wire was cut and some of the attacking party got up to the trench without being noticed. I think everybody learned something." *Letters of [Aqar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#)*, 194.

<sup>24</sup> Frank understood correctly. On July 1, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the British had 57,470 casualties, including 19,240 killed, most of them in the first hour of the fighting. Before it ended, the offensive cost the British nearly half a million soldiers. See [Wikipedia World War I](#).

## July 8

[F. W.] [Crawford](#) and I went down to the Scottish lines this morning – he to visit Col. [H. M.] [Dyer](#) and I to see Allan [Bell](#). Everyone still alive and on the job. They spent the early part of June holding hill 60. Lost about 300. Ser. [C.] [Spurgeon](#) came into our hut soon after dinner today and asked for sign painters. I made no move at first but later thought it over and figured I could bluff through it if someone was there to superintend. So I went up to Capt. [D. A.] [Clarke](#)<sup>25</sup> and told him I had done a little mechanical drawing and thought possibly I could manage the job. He then told [C.] Spurg. to hand my name into orderly office and see what they said about it, so am at present waiting to know if I go back to the trenches again with the boys or not.<sup>26</sup> Advance in south seems to be checked by enemy machine guns as much as anything.

## July 9

Received from Mr. Coffin 25 f.

## July 10

Came out in orders that I am transferred to pioneers. Hooray.<sup>27</sup>

## July 11

Came over to transport lines. Found [W. H.] [Lloyd](#) the other painter is leaving so will likely have it all to do. Worked most of the day painting truck signs. Went for a walk in the evening and found Vic [Lapp](#). He is a full corporal now. Reg[iment]. went to the trenches tonight.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> According to the War Diary of the PPCLI, Capt. D. A. Clarke had returned from Brigade duty on June 15 and assumed command of No. 2 Company. On July 1, the diary noted that "Lieut. (temp Capt) D. A. Clarke" had been "mentioned in dispatched by General Sir Douglas Haig."

<sup>26</sup> Frank's time as an orderly must have been coming to an end, so the opportunity to paint signs rather than returning to the trenches would have appealed to him. After the horrors of the battlefield, many men avoided going back if the opportunity arose.

<sup>27</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Pioneer Battalion was responsible for building roads, trenches, and tunnels, clearing rubble, burying cable, carrying out wounded, and a host of other jobs. Although their work could be dangerous, Frank undoubtedly reasoned that it was safer than being on the firing line. For information on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pioneer Battalion, see [russiansinthecef.ca](http://russiansinthecef.ca).

<sup>28</sup> On July 11, [Adamson](#) wrote: "The trenches we go into are the ones the Boches took from the Canadians and occupied for 8 days and were then driven out. In the short time they were there they put in quite a few steel dugouts under the parapets and parados, something we have never been able to do. Some of the trench is in fair order, but parts of it hardly exist and with no connections. We are in the back part of the support trenches for 4 days and then change with one of the Regiments in the Brigade [at Mount Sorrel]." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 195.

## July 12

Finished trench signs today. Getting on fine. Like the work. Am practically my own boss – no parades, no fatigues and probably no trenches.<sup>29</sup> Met Vic [\[Lapp\]](#) again. Had coffee and eggs in a Belgian dive.

## July 16

Heard the boys were to go over the parapet tonight.

## July 17

Learned today the Germans retired from their line on Mount Sorrel leaving our boys in undisputed possession.<sup>30</sup>

## July 18

Last night a very fierce bombardment up on our part of the line. Rumours of heavy casualties on our side.<sup>31</sup>

## July 19

Word came through that Louis [Robertson](#) and Lance C[orporal]. [T. G.] [McLean](#) is killed. Louis was to get a commission also in the regiment. Hear we lost 90 men. We are making crosses as fast as possible these days. Two of us are to go up to Ypres tonight for more timbers.

## July 20

Successfully stole timber for crosses and got back to camp about 3 AM.

## July 21

Painted a cross for a Pr. [T.] [Williams](#).

## July 22

Also one for poor [W. N.] [Jones](#).

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<sup>29</sup> Frank had good reason for rejoicing. The rest of his company faced a much more gruesome situation. On July 15, [Adamson](#) wrote, "Our different scouting parties during the night and crawling around during the day, came across a great many poor chaps dead, in one dugout which had been a dressing post, they found the remains of nine men. We also got an officer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battn. In many shell holes you would often see a foot sticking out and by digging eventually find a man who had been buried by the shell. We were able to take off their identification disks and report them as killed. It was not a very nice job. We also found some Germans. Our little cemetery in which a good many of the Brigade are buried was absolutely blown to pieces. The shell holes in places going as deep as twelve feet." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 196-197.

<sup>30</sup> In a letter to his wife Mabel, dated Mount Sorrel, 19 July 1916, Adamson wrote, "On the 17<sup>th</sup> our attack came off, capturing an advanced German trench and are still holding it. Our bombers went out and hid themselves in hastily dug trenches and at a given signal bombed and entered the new trenches. We then opened fire on their front and support lines, doing considerable damage to them. At a given signal we stopped firing and waited 15 minutes for retaliations, as nothing happened we re-opened and kept it up for an hour. We then reinforced the new trench and at 4 a.m. I got back to H.Q." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 198.

<sup>31</sup> The War Diary of the PPCLI reported that its casualties were light, but because the 42<sup>nd</sup> Bn. and the R.C.R.'s were also involved, it is likely that Frank meant the casualties of the entire 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

### July 23

Received letter and parcel from home containing top layer of Mother's silver wedding cake. Met a Capt. Campbell tonight. Very decent fellow.

### July 24

The balloon on the Vlamertinghe Road was shelled this evening. Several people and some horses hit. Balloon removed.<sup>32</sup>

### July 25

No painting these days. Boys coming back from Ypres tonight. We are moving to Steenwoorde [Steenvoorde] tomorrow.

### July 26

Marched to billets half a mile past Steenwoorde.<sup>33</sup>

### July 27

Loafed around pretty much all day.

### July 28

Had a kit inspection today.

### July 29

More kit inspection. Commander Byng [\[Byng\]](#) (however he spells it) is coming to inspect us. Route march in forenoon finding place where heroes are to be decorated for action of June 2.<sup>34</sup> Hear [H.W.] Nevin [\[Niven\]](#) got D.S.O. Sergt. Pat [Stewart [Paterson\]](#) got D.S.M. L. C. [J. W.] [Jeakins](#) military medal also Red [Rhodes](#) of McGill Co.

### July 30 [31]

Corps. Com. [Sir Julian H. C. [Byng\]](#) inspected us this morning. Very gruelling affair.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> [Observation balloons](#) were used by both sides in World War I to acquire information on enemy manoeuvres, so that appropriate action could be taken in response to them.

<sup>33</sup> They were just across the border in France about 25 miles west of Ypres. [Adamson](#) noted that it was "a very prosperous part of France," and "the people so different from the Belgians. They are ready to do anything for us." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 201. Adamson was probably unfair in this remark. The Belgians, whose lives and lands had been under constant threat for two years, probably had little energy left to "do anything" for soldiers on either side.

<sup>34</sup> The War Diary of the PPCLI reported the names of those receiving medals on July 22 and awarded them on July 30.

<sup>35</sup> Frank's date was incorrect. According to the PPCLI War Diary, on July 30, "A Brigade parade was held...for the purpose of the presentation of medal ribbons by Brigadier General [A. C.] [Macdonell](#)." The "gruelling affair" mentioned by Frank occurred on July 31, when Lieutenant General Hon. Sir Julian H. G. Byng inspected the troops, an event that the PPCLI Diary said lasted two and a half hours! Adamson wrote, "Our inspection came off this morning on a broiling hot day. General Byng inspected every man personally taking over three hours. We had 1050 on parade in full marching order and armed to the teeth. He found

### July 31

Night manoeuvres on tonight but do not think pioneers are for it. Wrote home and to Aldine St. [F.] [Greenaway](#) – our sergeant seems to have it in for me for some reason or other lately. Cannot figure out what is the trouble.<sup>36</sup>

### August 3

Left Steenwoorde at 6 tonight.<sup>37</sup> Got to A Camp about 11. Slept very little during night. Tired.

### August 4

[F.] Greenaway this morning told me to report back to the Company this afternoon. I asked him for an explanation but could get no satisfaction.<sup>38</sup> We are going to the trenches tonight. Walked to Poperinghe for a bath this morning. Received 25 f from Coffin today. Also letters from Mrs. Swift (acknowledging letter re T.G.G. [Ellis](#)), Harry B[eaumont] and mother. Letter from Mother upset me considerably. Answered as best I could. Parcel from Aldine St. Moved to strong point near Zelle-beke Bund. Good place to stay.

### August 5

Very quiet all day. Wrote home and to Aldine St. This evening taken sick and fainted at my post.

### August 6

Parcel from Ramsgate today. Sick again tonight. Boys carried me to dressing station on stretcher. Temp. sub-normal. Stayed in dressing station all day.<sup>39</sup> Sent down to transport lines tonight.

### August 8

Feeling pretty shaky all day. Tonight Fritz pulled off a gas attack. Pretty weak by the time it got back here. Heavy bombardment tonight.<sup>40</sup>

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very little fault and said many nice things. He afterwards inspected the transport and said in 30 years service he had never seen any better." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 202.

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps Sgt. Greenaway felt Frank was having too easy a time of it. As a private, there was little that Frank could do about Greenaway's attitude.

<sup>37</sup> They travelled via Abeele and Poperinghe.

<sup>38</sup> Frank's brief respite from the trenches was at an end, and he returned to No. 2 Company.

<sup>39</sup> No diagnosis for Frank's illness appeared in his diary or his personnel file. It may have been the delayed effects of the Battle of Sanctuary Wood or any one of numerous illnesses that could affect the soldiers on the front lines. However, the symptoms of shell shock were varied. A young officer named W. E. [Dunton](#), who was going into the trenches at the same time as Frank also had to be sent back to the transport lines because of illness. His breakdown probably resulted from the horrors of Sanctuary Wood.

<sup>40</sup> Frank was right about the gas attack on August 8, but the PPCLI War Diary reported no major bombardment that day. The War Diary of the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry mentioned some activity on August 8 and four casualties, but nothing extraordinary.

### **August 9 [10]**

Learned today that we suffered heavy casualties last night but lost no trenches.<sup>41</sup>

### **August 10 [13]**

Heard that L/C. [Andrew] [Elliotft](#) of 8 Platoon was killed last night.<sup>42</sup>

### **August 14 [15]**

Battalion came out tonight and we details moved down to F camp on Vlamertinghe Road.

### **August 14? [16?]**

Went sick this morning but got no satisfaction.

### **August 19**

Boys went back to the trenches for the last time in the salient – we understand. Moving down to Somme. Sam Hughes and Lloyd George inspected the Batt. last night.<sup>43</sup> I have been put along with several others of our company on fatigue at the batting [battn.] dump.<sup>44</sup> Work fairly heavy but hours short.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> According to the War Diary, the PPCLI relieved the Royal Canadian Regiment on August 9/10, taking over the front line trenches left sector from the Culvert on the Menin Road to Warrington Avenue and Lover's Walk. This was in the Sanctuary Wood area, where they had been on June 2-4. The "heavy casualties" that Frank mentioned may have occurred on August 10. The war Diary of the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade reported twelve casualties that day, including two wounded in the PPCLI and two deaths in the 49<sup>th</sup> battalion.

<sup>42</sup> L/Cpl Andrew Elliott, Reg. No. 704, of No. 2 Company was killed by shellfire on the evening of August 12. On August 13, [Adamson](#) wrote, "We had one man killed and two wounded last night. One of the wounded men had two pieces of the whizz-bang through the rim of his steel helmet, one piece right through the top, but did not damage his head. The helmet having virtually stopped the force. He was also shot through both shoulders, three fingers of one hand and four of the other were smashed. He walked a mile and a half to the dressing station as he considered it easier than being shaken about on a stretcher." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 208.

<sup>43</sup> The PPCLI War Diary noted the inspection by the Canadian "Minister of Militia," [Sam Hughes], but made no reference to the presence of David Lloyd George, who was the British Secretary of State for War at the time and soon to be Prime Minister. Adamson was singularly unimpressed by Hughes. On August 20, he wrote, " We got back at 6:30 in time to be reviewed by Sam Hughes who made a most stupid speech, winding up thus, 'Now boys I feel that I am responsible for bringing you out here, without me you could not have come. I am arranging your feeding and clothing you and when the proper time comes, I will lead you to victory. You can write home to all your people and tell them if you don't return I will provide for them and if you do I will see that all my boys are looked after and provided with good jobs or pensions.' We gave three cheers for the King, then three for Sam. The volume of sound was lacking, even my poor old charger did not cock his left ear." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 210. Sir Samuel Hughes (see biographies on [Wikipedia](#) and the [Dictionary of Canadian Biography](#)) a controversial figure throughout his political career, was later dismissed as Minister of Militia and Defence, for mismanagement of the war effort.

<sup>44</sup> This may have been the PPCLI dump, the place where supplies were left for distribution.

<sup>45</sup> Evidently Frank was deemed fit enough to go on a fatigue, but not well enough to accompany the rest of the battalion into the trenches.

## August 20

Sunday. Am on night shift. Nothing in forenoon and start about 3 in afternoon. Work till five and from 7 till 9:30.

## August 26

Fell in this morning at 9:30. Lined up with 7<sup>th</sup> Field Co. C. E. [Canadian Engineers]. Marched with them to our old billets west of Steenwoorde. Invited us to stay overnight. They carried our packs along in the wagons. Shared their rations and fixed us up a bath with a tarpaulin. Also shelter for the night.<sup>46</sup>

## August 27

This morning the CE's brought us on to the Batt. in their pontoons wagons – a distance of five miles or so further on. Billeted near Cassel.<sup>47</sup> Tonight wrote home, to Jean [Irving],<sup>48</sup> to J. A. [Gibson](#), and a -----? letter to Harry [Beaumont]. Helped a Frenchman top off a 15 load stack of wheat. Raised two blisters. Great country around here. Blackberries are ripe, fruit trees are loaded.<sup>49</sup>

## August 28

Field manoeuvres near Terdeghem.<sup>50</sup>

## August 29

Anniversary of the day we joined regiments at Armentieres last year. No celebration. We are very busy bayonet fighting and being coached for the kind of fighting we may expect in the Somme.<sup>51</sup> I pray God I may never get in a bayonet charge. Took a long walk alone last night around the hill by Cassel. Raining pretty steadily all day. Company drill parade this afternoon. Lecture on Stokes gun in forenoon.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Frank never explained why he was left behind when the PPCLI left for the Cassel training area on August 24.

<sup>47</sup> Cassel was about 7 km west of Steenvoorde, which was on the French side of the France/Belgium border and a little over 11 km south-west of Poperinge.

<sup>48</sup> This was the first reference to “Jean” in Frank’s diary. A cousin of Dick and Harry Beaumont, Jean Irving was teaching just outside of London at Shenstone Lodge, 42 Ashburnham Rd, Bedford, England. Grain Growers’ Note Pad, 1916-1917, p. 41. Jean became Frank’s wife in 1919 right after the war.

<sup>49</sup> On August 26, Agar [Adamson](#) wrote, “It is wonderful how the old men, women and children are getting in a wonderful harvest with no modern machinery. The poor people are allowed to glean the land in the old scriptural fashion, nearly all the farm horses are white, the others having gone to the war. They are large, beautiful beasts.” [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 214.

<sup>50</sup> Tergdeghem is a village located between Cassel and Steenvoorde. For pictures of this village and the “great country” around it, see [TrekEarth](#).

<sup>51</sup> For details on the training of the Canadian Corps for battle on the Somme, see Tim Cook, [At The Sharp End](#), 417-421.

<sup>52</sup> Frank provided more details on the training than did the War Diary of the PPCLI, which only recorded a series of “parades” between August 25 and 31.

### **September 1-5**

Training for attack in forenoons and afternoons. Spend evenings in solitary promenades and getting acquainted with a few of the people around here [Cassel]. Very nice family Paters pres du ----(?) can nord. Keeping a small packet for me until I either come for it or get done in. In latter event Madame keeps until after the war when she will send it home for me.

### **September 6**

Battalion parade in forenoon, practising attack in afternoon.

### **September 7**

Leaving dry little comfortable billets this morning at 11:30. Hate to go. Feeling very unsettled. Platoon is not what it was before the bombardment. Too many roughnecks. Would get transferred out of it but feel as if coming to end of the chapter anyway. Perhaps down in Somme there is a blighty – or worse - waiting for me.<sup>53</sup> For my own part I do not mind being quite resigned but it will be hard on the folks at home. Walked to Esquell [Esquelbecq] and there entrained. Travelled south all night. Very crowded in boxcar.<sup>54</sup>

### **September 8**

Marched from place [Conteville] where we left the train. 4 kils to Cramont. Stayed there all day resting.<sup>55</sup>

### **September 9**

Drilled in forenoon. Wrote farewell letter home. Can hear the Somme battle going on thirty miles to the east.

### **September 10**

Moved east today passing within 6 kilos of Flixecourt to the south. Walked about 10 miles to a place called Pernois, following a river along. Do not know its name.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The entire Canadian Corps was about to move from the Ypres salient to the Somme. Concerning this move, historian Tim Cook wrote, "Moving the Canadian Corps from Ypres in Belgium to the Somme battlefield had been an enormous challenge and had tested the resources and skills of the staff officers, to whom had fallen the task of working out marching timetables, arranging food, and tending to all the other necessities of moving the equivalent of a large Canadian town across a distance of 140 kilometres." Tim Cook, [At the Sharp End](#), 422.

<sup>54</sup> The Battalion would have taken the road north of Cassel about 10 km and turned west about 3 km to the railroad at Esquelbecq, boarded the train (box cars), and "travelled south all night."

<sup>55</sup> They left the train at Conteville and marched southwest about 4 km to the village of Cramont, which was approximately 90 km southwest of Cassel. Here they rested for two days. [Adamson](#) described it as "a beautiful little French village only ten miles away from the town [Flixecourt] we were in last year." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 217.

<sup>56</sup> On September 10, the PPCLI moved 10-12 km southeast via Domart to Saint Léger, which was about 6 km northeast of Flixecourt, where the battalion had been stationed in November 1915. From Saint Léger, the battalion marched east about 4 km to Pernois, where it remained for the night.

### September 11

Left Valley des Perois at 7:30 this morning. Arrived at Tottencourt [Toutencourt] about 1. March gruelling.<sup>57</sup> One man in 49th shot himself. We are now about 12 kilos from the trenches. This evening [H. W.] [Niven](#) (Major) told us goodbye as he is going to brigade staff or something of the sort. Hate to part with the little fellow. Very decent officer.

### September 12

Moved camp at 9:30 and journeyed to Harponville – about 5 kilos.<sup>58</sup> Dismal dive of a town. Not even a decent estaminet.<sup>59</sup>

### September 13

Moved to Albert, about 14 kils. At night everybody on fatigue near front line about 6 miles. Rained and was very cold. Did no work but did not get back to camp until 3 o'clock A.M.<sup>60</sup>

### September 14

The statue on the church here [Albert] is almost knocked over. She is called the diving lady by the troops from the diving position she hangs in.<sup>61</sup> From appearances one would judge something will soon be doing around here. Last night Lt. [H. C.] [Walker](#) came along. Awfully glad to see the little fellow. He is a sniper in the 26<sup>th</sup>. His officer is old [A. G. S.] [Fleming](#) who used to be a private in our platoon. We are camped in bivouacs in open fields. Very cold and dismal generally.

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<sup>57</sup> The trip east to Toutencourt via Naours, Talmas, and Puchevillers was 20 km, a long walk indeed.

<sup>58</sup> Harponville was about 5 km east of Toutencourt. [Adamson](#) wrote, "We were halted in a thoroughly deserted French village and put into billets. Every house is marked, showing its capacity to hold troops and what the cellars will hold. The village has not been shelled but most of the population has left it and it is in a very dilapidated condition." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 218.

<sup>59</sup> An estaminet was a small café or restaurant where soldiers could get something to eat and drink.

<sup>60</sup> Albert was about 14 km southeast of Harponville and 30 km northeast of Amiens. The battalion was now only about 10 km from the front. Camp was located in the Brickfields, northwest of Albert. Adamson wrote that there were "over 40,000 [Canadian Corps] troops all sleeping in the open," and Cook added they were under canvas "creating an awe-inspiring sea of tents." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 219, and Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 424.

<sup>61</sup> According to [Wikipedia](#) "During World War I, the statue of Mary and the infant Jesus - designed by sculptor Albert Roze and dubbed the 'Golden Virgin' - on top of the Basilica of Notre Dame de Brebieres was hit by a shell on January 15, 1915, and was put on a horizontal position and was near falling. The Germans said that whoever made the statue fall would lose the war, and a number of legends surrounding the "Leaning Virgin" developed among German, French, and British soldiers. The Leaning Virgin became an especially familiar image to the thousands of British soldiers who fought at the Battle of the Somme (1916), many of whom passed through Albert, which was situated three miles from the front lines." [Here](#) is a view of the church as it would have appeared to Frank in 1916.

## September 15

At 10:30 this morning we were suddenly called out and marched to a field east of Albert.<sup>62</sup> While sitting there we heard the C.M.R. and 21<sup>st</sup> had attacked and taken a very large number of prisoners.<sup>63</sup> General McDonnell [Brig. Gen. A. C. [Macdonell](#)] came down and told us we would make a charge at six this evening.<sup>64</sup> Waited in the field for an hour or so when the cook wagon came up. But they had no sooner started to dish out the dinner when we were ordered away. As we marched eastwards up the main artery we passed a large number of prisoners some carrying wounded both British and German. Saw one of the armoured cars they are all talking about.<sup>65</sup> One of the men with the machine said that out of seven that preceded [preceded] this morning's attack only two came back.<sup>66</sup> Led into an old trench a mile or two from the firing line and were then given our dinner – 4 o'clock. Shortly after, fell in and marched single file towards where the attack was to take place. As we got nearer we could see in front of us and on our right towards Flers our men advancing in open order. Shells falling and occasionally hitting the line. The country is very open – not a single tree to be seen – not a house – hardly a blade of grass so great and fierce has been the

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<sup>62</sup> The battle zone into which they were entering was so dangerous that extra precautions had been taken by their officers. On 16 September 1916, [Adamson](#) wrote, "A few hours before the Brigade moved off yesterday at 11 a.m., to attack at 6 p.m., an Army order was issued only allowing 21 officers to a Battn. to be in the assault. Second in Command of Battn., 2 I.C. of Companies, 15 percent of N.C.O.s and men to remain in support, so that in the event of the Battn. being knocked to pieces, some senior officers and N.C.O.s will be left to get together again." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 219.

<sup>63</sup> The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, the third and final British offensive in the Battle of the Somme, commenced on September 15. Five battalions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Division went "over the top" at 6:20 a.m. with the aim of capturing ground in and around the Village of Courcelette, and by 8:00 a.m., they controlled most positions to the south of Courcelette. However, the casualties resulting from this advance had been enormous. Cook, [At the Sharp End](#), 447-455.

<sup>64</sup> This second offensive was ordered by General [Byng](#) to take advantage of confusion on the German lines. On the left, the PPCLI and other battalions of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> brigades, 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Division, were to move toward Courcelette from the trenches captured by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> CMRs [Canadian Mounted Rifles] in the morning. Similarly, on the right, the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Battalions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division were to move forward from trenches captured earlier that day and take Courcelette itself.

<sup>65</sup> Adamson described them in detail. "The great surprise of the attack yesterday was the appearance of Armoured Caterpillars, called 'H.M. Land Navy', they can go over any ground, over a 12 foot trench or a 6 foot wall, they knock down anything in front of them, including trees, their great secret is being able to change their centre of gravity. To knock a tree down they rear up and put their weight on to it, to knock down a parapet they simply push it. They are very heavy and armed with quick firing guns and manned by the Royal Field Artillery. They carry a search light. Machine-gun fire or a whizz-bang has no effect on them, only a direct hit will put them out and as they are constantly moving, it is difficult to do this. Three of them last night went right through a fortified village and returned. They are the wonder of the war." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 220.

<sup>66</sup> There were forty-nine tanks in this battle, and the Canadians had seven of them. Cook, [At the Sharp End](#), 438. This was the first time that tanks had been used during the war, and although they intimidated the Germans at first, they were unable to supply the extra support needed to achieve a breakthrough in the German lines.

shellfire.<sup>67</sup> Soon the Germans enjoying our brightly polished uniforms opened a barrage of fire in front of us – chiefly heavy high explosive. Once a shell dropped right in our line killing or wounding a dozen or more. Still on we ran dodging into shell holes as we heard a shell coming.<sup>68</sup> At last we got over the ridge and started down the slope towards Courcelette. For an hour or two we were halted in a German trench. Quite a few dead and wounded lying about. Our No .1 and 3 Coys have made the attack at the last minute and we believe successfully. Shortly after dark we were taken out of the trench and moved down the sunken road to the old German communication trench. Many dead lying along road. After getting into com. trench I found me a dug-out where I had a little sleep during the night. Dead man lying close by name of [R. T.] [Mullin](#) – took his papers.<sup>69</sup>

## September 16

In the morning a heavy shellfire was started by both sides. Our trench coming in for a good share of the shelling. A party of sixty Germans in a trench opposite were stumbled upon by a stray bombing party and promptly surrendered. They came up our trench and seemed well pleased at their fate. To the wounded we gave water and cigarettes to the others. Seemed a cheerful bunch but all possessing a sickly sort of pallor – altogether different from our healthy looking fellows.<sup>70</sup> At night we were moved down into the trench these fellows had deserted – east of Courcelette and there spent the night.<sup>71</sup> Many German dead and a few wounded lying about. Spent the early part of the night digging a sentry post in the parapet and making it as splinter proof as possible. For a while on patrol with [F. T.] [Mabson](#) and [F.] [Loco](#) between our trench and the left of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. who are at the cross road north of Courcelette. Sergt. [John] [Jones](#) called

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<sup>67</sup> In the words of Tim Cook, “The Somme battlefield was a wasteland of ruined farmer’s fields; scummy, water-filled shell holes; and acres of unburied corpses....The British had been fighting here for three months, trading more than 250,000 men for less than 8 kilometres of German trench system.” Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 447.

<sup>68</sup> Moving forward through open fields in broad daylight, they were easy targets for the enemy, and the slaughter was terrible, especially among the soldiers of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> battalions on the right. For a vivid description, see Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 458-460.

<sup>69</sup> According to the War Diary of the PPCLI, the battalion first moved forward into the “sunken road running south of Courcelette” and captured 75 prisoners, then the front line 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Companies moved on to take the flanks of the Fabeck Graben line, before falling back and consolidating their position with the help of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Companies, who were in Support.

<sup>70</sup> According to the PPCLI War Diary for September 16, “Heavy shelling all morning particularly on support line. About 4 pm took remainder of second objective [centre of Fabeck Graben trench not captured the previous day] by bombing attack and 62 unwounded prisoners besides.” Frank’s observations concerning these German soldiers revealed a compassion for the enemy that was not always shown during this battle. He was not alone. [Adamson](#) recorded that “[Haggard](#), who was shot through the arm, with one man brought out 35 prisoners, unwounded. They were captured in a dugout. After taking the trench, they were so scared, he had not the heart to shoot them.” [Letters of Aqar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 219. Nevertheless, as Tim Cook noted in *At the Sharp End*, 450-451, in other places in the battlefield, Canadian troops had killed surrendering soldiers.

<sup>71</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Companies relieved the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Fabeck Graben trench at 10:30 p.m.

for volunteers to take out Sergt. [John] McDonald [[MacDonald](#)] – hit in the stomach. [A. H. S.] Beach [[Beech](#)], [H. L.] [Chappell](#), [H. G.] [Watson](#) and myself volunteered.<sup>72</sup> (The rest of the platoon are being relieved in an hour or two so we will not come back).<sup>73</sup> Stretcher made of two Mauser rifles and a rubber sheet. McDonald [MacDonald] in great pain. Having considerable trouble with him but nothing so bad as we had with [C. G.] Butchard [[Butchart](#)] on the night of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of June. Carried him two hundred yards or so when I decided to go and fetch help and a stretcher. Got a party of four and a stretcher a little way down the trench. Other three men stayed with stretcher while Sergt. [McG. F.] McIntosh [[MacIntosh](#)] gave me a job of burying one of the men in his platoon. I found a German entrenching tool and dragged him to a nearby shell and there covered him up as hurriedly as I could as the shells were falling pretty thick. On getting back to the trench I heard a man say he saw a wounded Britisher in a trench off to the east. Man had been there two days and needed to be got out. Volunteered to go and find him. Got a stretcher party and started out. After travelling over a mile of open country we came to the trench and after some little difficulty found our man but there was another wounded man there too. So I volunteered to stay with him while the stretcher party took the first wounded man out. They are to send help at once.<sup>74</sup>

### September 17

Waited with this man for two hours. His name is [F. W.] [Jones](#) and was with the 21<sup>st</sup> when they made the attack on the 1<sup>st</sup> [15<sup>th</sup>].<sup>75</sup> He and four others were struck by a shell which killed three and wounded another. He's been lying here ever since. Trench is full of British and German dead – chiefly German. They are nearly all without their equipment on which looks as though our men had bayoneted them.<sup>76</sup> At last decided that stretcher party are not sending help or are perhaps knocked out by a shell. Start out for help alone. Saw a rifle stuck up some 200 yards to the right. There are many such but went over to see if the man might be still alive. At first I thought he was dead but to my surprise he was

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<sup>72</sup> According to the PPCLI War Diary, "Evacuation of wounded carried on continuously during the night ... All wounded were evacuated and all dead, as far as were known, buried."

<sup>73</sup> They were relieved by the 52<sup>nd</sup> Bn. just before daybreak.

<sup>74</sup> In the evening of August 16, [Adamson](#) wrote, "Our Brigade has done well. The Battn. gained their objective, but have suffered very severely, they are still holding on and particulars are very hard to get. So far we know for a fact that Stanley Martin (Major) has been killed, and the following Lieutenants wounded, Haggard, Tyndale, Ten Broeke, Hodder-Williams, Robinson, Grant, Rosamond and all the Sergeants of No. 4 Company, including the Sergeant-Major, either killed or wounded. They came out tonight and if only one quarter of the rumours are true, I fear we are badly smashed up." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 219

<sup>75</sup> After considerable research spanning nearly a year, this young man was eventually identified by Al Lloyd, historian, 21<sup>st</sup> Battalion, on 21 May 2010. Pte. Frederick William Jones, Reg. No. 141708, was just nineteen years of age when he was wounded at the Battle of Courcellette. See his [biography](#) at the website of the 21<sup>st</sup> Battalion.

<sup>76</sup> Frank's observation was probably correct, as Canadians did bayonet surrendering soldiers in this battle.

alright. No food or water for two days – shot in the knee. Assure him of help as soon as possible and hurry on. It is a grand yet terrible scene and I cannot help sparing a moment to take it in. No sun is rising, there is no sound and smoke from the shells stays in huge patches. Nearby the shattered German trench with dead men lying sprawling in all shapes all over and as far as I can see. I am in full view of the Germans but they do not shoot probably guessing my mission. A moment to take in a picture that I will never forget in this world and I hurry on.<sup>77</sup> Reach the crest of the ridge and am out of danger from bullets although shells still falling. One of our “Devil Machines” [tanks] is lying wrecked a little off to the right. A pile of bricks that was once Monquet [Mouquet] farm but I hang on and only give it a glance. Find a party of stretcher bearers that will get one man so go back with them. They fix up the boy [Jones] with the wounded back and I go ahead to find another party to look after the lad in the shell hole. Get a bunch of volunteers about a mile away and lead them to where he is. Help carry the stretcher down to the dressing room. Beginning to feel the strain.<sup>78</sup> Heard regiment has moved out so make my own way down past the chalk pits out on to the main road. Find the company camped on a hillside just east of Albert.<sup>79</sup> Casualties – [F.] [Crofts](#), Percy [Armstrong](#), [A. A.] [Dove](#), [George] [Briggs](#), Lt. [A. E.] [Goodeve](#), Major [S. F. A.] [Martin](#), [Wm.] [MacLurg](#), killed (man I know), [R.] [Holmes](#), [R. M.] [Gordon](#), [F. T.] [Mabson](#), Lts. [M.] Newbrook [[Tenbroeke](#)], [Rider L.] [Haggard](#) and [R. W. [Hodder-](#)] [Williams](#) wounded. Total of casualties in 36 hours about 380.<sup>80</sup> Managed to get out as souvenirs a German flare pistol and a good bayonet and belt. Advanced on hillside tonight. Very cold. Rained towards morning.

### September 18

Rained all day. Bivouaced again although within half a mile of Albert where thousands of houses lie empty. For my part I found a hole under a trench where I spent the night shivering and wet.<sup>81</sup>

### September 19

This afternoon moved into Albert. Saw Allan [Bell](#) as we passed down the road.

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<sup>77</sup> The silence on the darkened battlefield was in such marked contrast to the thunder of the guns during the previous day that it was indeed “a grand and terrible scene,” one that stopped this thoughtful and intelligent man in his tracks in spite of the obvious danger.

<sup>78</sup> Frank had probably been without sleep for more than twenty-four hours by this time, for it was dawn and the battalion had already moved to its billets.

<sup>79</sup> The battalion was at a place called “Tara Hill” where it remained until the move into Albert on September 19.

<sup>80</sup> [Adamson](#) wrote, “Our casualties were Officers killed 3, wounded 7, Men killed 86, wounded 192 ... We took, during the 48 hours, 212 unwounded prisoners. I have not the numbers of the wounded.” [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 221.

<sup>81</sup> Adamson wrote, “We all slept on the slope of a hill in the open, in pouring rain. The consequence is we are wet through ... The rain was very heavy and a cold wind blowing.” [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 221.

**September 23**

Left Albert this morning at 7 A.M. Travelled 10 kilos to Warloy where we are now billeted.<sup>82</sup> Cached a German flare pistol with Mde. Deux-Cage.

**September 24**

Moved to Lavicogne [La Vicogne] – 14 kilos today.<sup>83</sup>

**September 25**

Moved to Bonneville – 9 kilos.<sup>84</sup>

**September 26**

Paid today – 70 francs.

**September 27**

Moved back to Harponville – 18 kils.<sup>85</sup> Put on guard all night. Seem to be developing whooping cough lately. Have reported sick last two mornings but can get no satisfaction from M.O. [Medical Officer].

**September 28**

Moved to Albert – 14 kilos. Billeted in our old billets.

**September 29**

Went sick again as cough getting worse. Still no satisfaction.

**September 30 [Oct 1]**

Stayed in Albert today. Working party up the line about 9 kilos.

**October 1 [2]**

Moved up into trenches about ¼ mile from fire trench. Raining steadily. Mud from head to foot no dug-outs or rum. Spent the night alternately digging a burrow under the parapet and shivering inside it. About 1 o'clock Fritz counter attacked and we "stood to" for an hour or so. Fritz repulsed.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> They travelled via Bouzincourt to Warloy, which was directly west of Albert. In the evening there was a concert by the battalion "concert party" for the draft of 140 men received on September 21, no doubt to raise morale and help integrate the new men into the battalion.

<sup>83</sup> They travelled west-northwest through Toutencourt, Puchevillers, Val-de-Maison to La Vicogne.

<sup>84</sup> Bonneville was northwest of La Vicogne.

<sup>85</sup> They were returning to their point of departure to the southeast, stopping at Harponville, which was northwest of Albert. These long marches were designed to toughen the men to ensure they would be fit and ready for action.

<sup>86</sup> On October 2, the battalion moved into support lines west of Courcellette at around 4:00 p.m. relieving the 2<sup>nd</sup> C.M.Rs of the 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Brigade. It remained there, supplying working parties at the front, until October 4, when it was relieved by the 8<sup>th</sup> Bn., South Lancashire Regiment.

### **October 2 [3]**

Slept nearly all day. Working party called for tonight at 6. Made our way as best we could for an hour when it was discovered we had no shovels. Sent back for shovels. Got shovels and went forward again for an hour or two more. Walked, about turned and walked back. What we were supposed to have done or why we didn't do it I know not, at any rate after waiting in line for half an hour more while Fritz shelled continually and stray bullets innumerable whizzed by, I was at length issued a good stiff tot of rum. Made my way to dug-out and slept more or less soundly for the rest of the night. I mention this working party more fully than usual as it typifies one out of three night parties. The other two vary only in that one eventually arrives at his destination where he is supposed to work six hours.

### **October 3 [4]**

Relieved about 5:30 this afternoon by S. Lancs. Shelled heavily coming out but had remarkable luck and only two or three were hit. Got out onto the main road and there learned we have to do four more days in these parts. Walked down to Tara hill, one kilo from Albert and there we bivouacked for the night. Ground very wet. No rum but slept very well notwithstanding.

### **October 4 [5]**

Cleaned rifles, washed a pair of socks and my face, scraped off the mud that was caked about my person and went on fatigue in afternoon erecting bivvies [biffies or outdoor toilets]. Worked until three, had tea, drew six hours rations and marched back into trenches at 5 o'clock. In reserves a little in rear of where we were yesterday. Trench badly filled in. No dug-out and deepening trench. My nice dug-out caved in but by morning had it in fine shape.<sup>87</sup>

### **October 6**

Found a piece of German sheet iron which improved roof of dug-out considerably. On fatigue in forenoon making dug-outs for Lt. [G.G.] [Reynolds](#), who by the way comes from Biggar. Slept a couple of hours in afternoon. Working party digging "jumping-off" trench in front of our line. Shelled all the time but only two were hit. Back by one o'clock. Rum issue and turned in. Yesterday I found a cow hide medicine chest – German – which I cut and laid on floor of dug-out which keeps out a lot of damp and cold. This leaves a big rubber sheet to put over me. It is getting so cold nowadays we need our great coats in the trenches but haven't got them.

### **October 7**

This morning took a stroll around, many German dead still lying there. They were killed two weeks ago. Stench not so bad considering. Begged some tea off an Imperial in Baurdouvin(?) and found a little water and made myself some tea. Result was my spirits were revived sufficiently to write this diary from Sept. 30 up

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<sup>87</sup> The battalion was in support to the west of Courcelette, with No. 4 Company in Fabeck Trench, No. 2 and 3 in Macdonnell Trench, and No. 1 in Centre Way.

to date. This afternoon detailed along with 33 others and an officer to go back to the dump and guide in RCR's and 49<sup>th</sup>. Sniped with 5.9s as we crossed the ridge.<sup>88</sup> No one hit. After getting to the dump officer decided unsafe to return before dark so I volunteered to take message to that effect back to Hdq. Sniped on way back. Returned to the dump safely and the remainder of the party guided the two regiments in after dark. I went back to dug-out in support trench under my own steam as I was not required. At 11 tonight was moved up into attack trench where we spent the rest of the night.

### **October 8**

At five this morning our guns opened up and the RCRs and 49<sup>th</sup> went over and PP supported. At six we moved up into RCR's jumping off trench. Dead and wounded plentiful even there. Sniped by whiz bangs and rifles as we crossed from trench to trench. Learn their attack has failed. RCR nearly wiped out. Stayed in jumping off trench for two or three hours when we retired back to Fabeck trench.<sup>89</sup> [John] [Jones](#) (Sgt.), [Edwin] [Young](#),(SM) [S.] Patterson [[Paterson](#)] among wounded in our platoon. Took one wounded man down to dressing station (RCR) during afternoon.<sup>90</sup> In the ... (*diary ends here but Book 4 picks up at Oct 9*)

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<sup>88</sup> They were sniped by a [German 5.9 in. field howitzer](#), a gun that was mounted on a wheeled "lorry", so that it could be moved from place to place. See [Wikipedia Howitzer](#) for more information.

<sup>89</sup> The attack centred on the German held Regina Trench. After the RCR and the 49 Bn. had moved out of Hessian Trench, No. 2 and No. 4 Companies of the PPCLI moved into support from Fabeck Trench. At around 11:00 a.m., they had to return to Fabeck, when the R.C.R. retreated to the Hessian, the attack having been repulsed by the enemy. The PPCLI was relieved at 8:00 p.m. by the 4<sup>th</sup> C.M.R.s who with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Bn. took over the line.

<sup>90</sup> [Adamson](#) wrote, "The casualties have been tremendous. The R.C.R. came out with only 80 men, the 49<sup>th</sup> with 160, the 42<sup>nd</sup> with 200, the P.P. 250, no officer casualties." [Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919](#), 223. According to the War Diary of the 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Brigade, the P.P.C.L.I. had 12 soldiers killed, 76 wounded, and 2 missing. The R.C.R. fared much worse. They had 16 soldiers killed, 10 officers and 145 other ranks wounded, and 6 officers and 206 other ranks missing.