

WILLIAM BINNING

DIARY 1916

William kept a small pocket diary during the first four months of 1916. Any comments or paraphrasing are in italics.

William crossed to France for the first time in October 1915. He joined the 9th Battalion The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in the 9th Division in the Salient which he describes in his diary as 'beastly'. In January 1916 he joins the Machine Gun Corps and after training in January he rejoins the 9th Division which is now serving north east of Armentieres where the Front Line runs through the village of Le Touquet.

At the front of the diary he puts down that he is a size 16 in shirt collars, a size 7 1/4 in hats and size 9 in shoes.

January Saturday 1

Rejoined the 9th Scottish Rifles (*he had spent the latter part of December in hospital with an abscess in his mouth*) from 9th Division Base Depot after conducting draft to Bailleul to 2nd Royal Scots.

Detrained at Hazebrouck and landed at Strazeele by motor bus
Take command of section again

January Sunday 2

Transferred to Machine Gun Corps- 28th M.G. Coy

No Further entries until 25th January

January Tuesday 25

From 3rd to 26th time employed refitting and training
Fairly decent weather and ample opportunity for pleasure

January Wednesday 26

Strazeele – check information for move to trenches

January Saturday 29

Ploegsteert and Le Bizet much better than the beastly salient
Relieved M.G. Unit Loyal North Lancashire
Emplacements generally worthless

February Tuesday 1

Ricochet gets me in the arm Thank god it was nothing worse (*among his possessions sent home to his father was a piece of shrapnel – perhaps the piece that hit him?*)
Laing wounded in arm

February Thursday 3

Looking forward too leave – terribly anxious

February Friday 4

Relief 9pm
Le Bizet 10.30pm
Leave

February Saturday 5

Steenwerck 5.30am
Boulogne 12.30pm
London 6pm

February Sunday 6

Edinburgh 7.45am

February Monday 7

Lochgelly (*his grandparents lived in Lochgelly as did his girlfriend Jean Kelso*)

February Tuesday 8

Kelty

February Wednesday 9

Lochgelly

February Thursday 19

Fultons (*Adam Fulton was his best friend at school*)
J (*Jean his girlfriend*) to Lochgelly Our Happy Day (*possibly a reference to their engagement*)

February Friday 11

Edinburgh
Cigarettes from Mrs Dick

February Saturday 12

Edinburgh
10.50 to France

February Sunday 13

9.15 from Victoria
Report for duty
9.50am
Folkestone 12noon
2.30
Boulogne 4.30
Train full – detrained in Boulogne
Hotel de Paris with Mason

February Monday 14

Nothing much to do
Postcards to home and Jean
Train at 7.15
Mess cart at Steenwerck 1.30am

February Tuesday 15

Steenwerck and Le Bizet
Trenches with Paterson (*his Captain*)
Concert at night
Rennie killed (*2nd Lt in the 9th Battalion Cameronians – Buried in Nieppe Communal cemetery*)

February Wednesday 16

Cockfight in forenoon – most horrible sight
I won't see another again
Relief to Grand Rabeque Farm at 6pm (*still operates as a farm today*)
Weather beastly

February Thursday 17

Grand Rabeque

Night – building emplacements

Steady shelling

February Friday 18

Very stormy and wet

Letter from Belle (*his sister*) and MRM (*friend from Edinburgh*)

Write off all correspondence and post

Building emplacements in subsidiary line

Chat with Frenchie

February Saturday 19

(this date is heavily underlined – found out subsequently that this was Jean's birthday on locating her birth certificate)

Grand Rabeque

Very miserable day not much rain but cold and depressing

Wrote off all correspondence

Letter in wallet for Jean

Strafe in Frelinghien

Le Touquet 6.30 to 7pm

750 rounds fired – muzzle cup broken no other stoppages

Parcel from home and letter from J

February Sunday 20

Sand bagging old emplacements

Nothing very much doing A splendid day

Long letter to J

Strafe Frelinghien at 2.30am

500 rounds Air fights

February Monday 21

Feeling rather seedy today
Weather fair but cold and overcast
Tremendous bombardment south of us 8am – 4pm
Is something going to happen soon?
I wonder if there will be any mail for me today
Strafe at 5.30pm
500 rounds
2 men down with flu
Bombardment down south – 5pm
Letter from Jean

February Tuesday 22

A most horrible day – rain snow sleet and bitterly cold
Relief from GR to trenches
A beastly cold night – very quiet
Rankine forgets parcel

February Wednesday 23

Snow and bitterly cold
fairly quiet
no working party at No3 emplacement owing to hardness of ground
A very hard frost at night caused anxiety as to working of guns

February Thursday 24

Feeling pretty seedy
Bombardment at 3pm on enemy's wire and trenches
Strafed working party at 6pm
Looking forward to mail tonight
Feeling downcast at not getting leave
Letter from J – answered

February Friday 25

J. B. Anderson killed (*a private in the 9th Cameronians aged 42 – presumably in William's section*)

Still very cold

Working on emplacements

Letter to Jean posted

Puttees and badge ordered from trench stores

Letters from Jean and Adam

Mining ops

Hun sap blown up

February Saturday 26

Letter to J and Adam

Very cold – snow Gas alarm at 11.30pm

Parcel from home

February Sunday 27

Still very cold – rainy

Fatigue party sent up but had to be returned

No post today

Feeling fed up

February Monday 28

Relief to Le Bizet

Strafe op 98 at 9.30

Bitterly cold and wet

2nd star through General

I wonder if there will be mail tonight. Let's hope so

February Tuesday 29

Le Bizet. Working party tonight

Letter from Jean

March Wednesday 1

Le Bizet

Armentieres

March Thursday 2

Parcel Jean
Le Bizet
Working party

March Friday 3

Le Bizet
Working party

March Saturday 4

Le Bizet
Horrible day – snow
Cleared up in the afternoon

March Sunday 5

Relief

Grand Rabeque
Relieved Rankine
Horrible day and night

March Monday 6

Most peculiar day
Morning snow –noon sunny-early afternoon hail and snowstorm – afternoon turning fine
No mail
Shelling Le Touquet – Le Bizet road. Narrow escape

March Tuesday 7

Horrible day again – snow rain
NO Mail
Feeling pretty fed up and out of sorts

March Wednesday 8

Weather not bad
Had to send orderly up to Rankine for letter form Jean. No other mail
Strafe on 6. – 6.45pm 750 rounds

March Thursday 9

Ripping day
Not had mail and still no parcel
Strafe 5.45 – 7.15pm
1000 rounds

March Friday 10

Letter from J and MRM
Bit upset but decide to tell J. everything
Letter from Adam
Horribly rainy day

March Saturday 11

Still at Grand Rabeque
Letter and parcel from home
Broad 6th Dorsets died of wounds

March Monday 13

Grand Rabeque
No parcels and very little mail
Heavy snow and altogether beastly weather

March Tuesday 14

Weather changes – very sunny and quite ripping
Noted briskness in artillery actions and planes

March Wednesday 15

Le Bizet shelled
Belle and Johnnie ill (*his younger brother and sister*)

March Thursday 16

Le Bizet and Grand Rabeque shelled pretty heavily – slight casualties
Very hot and quite decent weather

March Friday 17

Relief to Trenches – one team to screen Avenue
Dug out hit in afternoon – no damage done

March Saturday 18

Dugout hit by trench mortar 12.30pm while writing letters home 2 killed and some wounded

Working party at night at loophole

Weather decent

Letter from Jean and home

March Sunday 19

Working party strafed with MGs at 102

A beastly day for frightfulness

Still fine weather with slight rain during night

Leave begins again

March Monday 20

Round right sector with old 'Bellicose Bob'

Paterson wears badge for first time (*Captain – Machine Gun Corps badge*)

Another rare day

Working party strafed with rifle and machine gun fire

No more chemicals fortunately

Belle alright again Poor wee Johnnie

March Tuesday 21

Rain again pretty heavily

Must see about parapet in 102

5.30 – 6.15 the worst $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour I have ever spent constant trench mortaring

my sincere wish that it won't happen again

A beastly headache and feeling absolutely useless

Two letters from Jean

Letter to MRM

March Wednesday 22

Fairly quiet day

Poor Bill Lambert wounded on patrol in front of 102.

Still suffering from yesterday's trench mortaring

So 'fed up' I can't do anything today

March Thursday 23

Relief to Grand Rabeque

March Friday 24

GR

Nothing much doing

March Saturday 25

GR

Quite good weather

March Sunday 26

GR

Letter from Mrs Kelso (*Jean's mother*)

March Monday 27

A horrible day

March Tuesday 28

Not bad today

March Wednesday 29

Relief to front line

Shelling at 11.30 and Rankine didn't get one in all his six days

Very good weather

March Thursday 30

Paterson goes off

Cramond badly hit with minenwefers

March Friday 31

Artillery and air activity

Very good weather but cold at night

April Saturday 1

All Fools' Day - and here we are still fooling about in France
Stream from aeroplane

April Sunday 2

Nothing much doing
Air activity artillery activity

April Monday 3

Still rare weather
Armentieres strafed
Still no word of Bill Lambert (*this is believed to be 2nd Lt W Lambert attached to the 9th Battalion Cameronians who died on 23 March*)

April Tuesday 4

Relief to GR
Huns strafe 4.-4.30 – our retaliation pretty good
Not so fine today
Strafing normal but not quiet
Aerial and artillery actions predominant

April Wednesday 5

No indirect fire owing to breakage of rear case catch spring
Quite good weather

April Thursday 6

Still at GR
Sniping at Hun MG

April Friday 7

Le Bizet shelled 20 men wounded
Strafe at night
Letter from Jean

April Saturday 8

Round Subsidiary lines with Bailey and McKinlay

Still really good weather but I'm a bit fed up. I shall probably go back for tea this afternoon

April Sunday 9

£30

nothing much doing

Grand Rabeque shelled with 6 inch shrapnel

April Monday 10

Still at GR

Weather still holding good

April Tuesday 11

Strafing at night – Frelinghien main road

Letters to everybody today

Weather now becoming rotten

April Wednesday 12

No letter from Jean

Strafing trench and railway

Weather pretty awful

Leave stops 18inst.

April Thursday 13

All leave stopped. I'm turned back from Steenwerck

Hun MG gets on to emplacement – effectively prevents firing

Letter from Jean

April Friday 14

Letter to Army and Navy store

Captain Steele visits trenches – 2nd Aust. Brig. M.G. Coy

Letter from Jean

April Saturday 15

Belle's birthday
Nothing much doing today
GR shelled pretty heavily
2 Zepps busy overhead en route to Steenwerck

April Sunday 16

Relief to Le Bizet tonight
Nothing much doing today
Our own artillery very quiet and no sniping. Scheme coming off tonight
No word of move or anything
Feeling fed up with people at home carping etc. Asquith and all the others want to come out here

April Monday 17

Poor Mosse accidentally shot – very hard lines on the poor fellow
Rain all day

April Tuesday 18

Court of Enquiry on Mosse's death
Raining pretty heavily
Burial at Tancrez Farm cemetery (*this is Mosse*) 8.30 pm raining heavily all the time

April Wednesday 19

Nothing really much doing
Instructing the men

April Thursday 20

Weather beastly these days
Instructing at H.Q.
Feeling pretty rotten

April Friday 21

Weather still pretty rotten
News about Brigade being sent up
S.A. Scottish coming here

April Saturday 22

Relief to trenches

William is wounded on the night of 22/23 April. Dies in Casualty Clearing station No2 on 24 April. Buried in Bailleul Communal Cemetery extension on 25 April. He was 19. Optimistically he has Friday 28 April marked in his diary as the next day he would be out of the trenches.