



## Letters from the Past No. 18

### The Letters of the Clarke Family of Coila

This is the first in a series of letters to and from Frederick Clarke. The earliest letters we have written by Fred are from 1917. These first letters are from his mother and his friend Joe Cambey.

Frederick Clarke was the eldest son and third of the ten children born to William and Eliza Clarke of Coila. He was born on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1896. His father William Henry Clarke was the son of John Clarke and Eliza Bailey and was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1860 in Braidwood. His mother, Eliza Gray was born on 11 Oct 1869 at Stoney Creek and was the daughter of Edward Gray and Ellen Troy.

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#### The children of William and Eliza Clarke

Beatrice Ellen	born 21 August 1891 died 1894
Ivy Monica	born 29 <sup>th</sup> July 1893
Frederick	born 21 <sup>st</sup> September 1896
Irene	born 1898
Arthur Edward	born 30 <sup>th</sup> December 1899

William	born 8 <sup>th</sup> September 1902
Female (deceased)	1904
Elsie	born 25 <sup>th</sup> April 1906 died 1913
John	born 3 <sup>rd</sup> September 1908
Robert Leslie	born 30 <sup>th</sup> March 1914

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#### Letter 1 (Dated Monday 15)

*Dear Fred*

*A few lines in answer to your welcome letter and was pleased to hear you arrived safe. There was no need to hurry, it was lucky you caught the cream cart. I dare say you are anxious to hear how we are getting on. Cantley is taking our milk, Artie is having a weeks holiday, Allan Rose is leaving next week, Fred ?ison is robbing the bees tonight hope he will get some honey. I suppose you got some fatherly advice going down. Well Fred I have not got much news, the latest is Mrs H Bowen has got twin girls, you might come across the Salways in Cobargo, the show wasn't much good, I never went Jack and Rene went with Cantlays.*

*That was a very nice letter you wrote. I will ring off hoping this will find you quite well as it leaves us at present. With fond love*

*From your loving Mother*

*Write soon, don't forget.*

#### Letter 2

Bergalia Febuary 1915

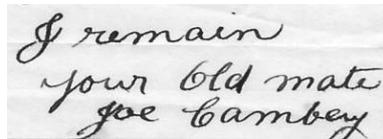
Dear Fred

I received your ever welcome letter some time back I am sorry that I did not see you before you left but never mind I will see you before long. I went down to your mothers place on Monday the day after you left, she told me that you went to Cobargo this morning. .... I am still at Lakeview, yet I go fishing down at the sea I catch Schnapper too. I went to the races the day after the show. I got

drunk that night. Old Jim Colbran won the big money with Seneline seven furlongs a good race. Things are the same way about Coila. Old Jack Healey is left he gone to Bega. Coxons Hotel is to be sold on Saturday. I might get a job fishing with Cantley and Newman, we go shooting of an evening. I eat about three water melons every day, having a good time. There is no body living in the red house at the Bridge yet. I believe the Kiaser says he is not frightened of you I never speak to him but I am waiting a chance to get a hit at him if I do I break his jaw I wont take pity on him. I gave the letter to Mollie you sent in my letter. John Hawdon is living at Kiora now, Les Hawdon is living at Kyla Park. Excuse me for not writing before there are milking ninty four cows at Lakeview. I have got a toothache myself, Old Bill is fencing down at Bingie, my old man is out at Kiora for a week working for John Hawdon. Fred Anderson got some good grapes now it a pitty we're not about we would give them a rough time. I am thinking about making a raid on them myself, write soon and let me know how you are getting on down there this is all for this time so good bye Fred

I remain

Your Old Mate Joe Cambey



### Letter 3 April 16, 1915

*Dear Fred*

*A few lines in answer to your welcome letter and was glad to hear from you. You must have had a bad time with your finger you ought to take some blood medicine Clements tonic is good you got to take pills while you are taking it it was good of you to send for the fruit trees, where would be the best place to put them in the orchard or make the garden at the house bigger. We have had a nice lot of rain and getting nearly eight gallons of milk. Ivy will be home for two or three months as Lodges are going away for the winter. I don't know where you are going to get a boy, they don't want Artie to leave the factory, if he was leaving it would be all right to go down. JC is looking for a house and can't get one, he don't seem to be looking for work. Don't neglect a cold if you get one, get rid of it at once. I will now conclude, hoping this will find you quite well as it leaves us at present.*

*From Mother*



The Family lived at "Oakfield" Coila. "Oakfield" had originally been owned by Eliza's father Edward Gray. The property on the southern foreshore of Coila Lake was at the time of the letters about 62 acres. It was a small dairy farm with William Clark also working as a coachdriver.

"Lakeview" referred to in Joe's letter is across the Lake from "Oakfield" on the Northern Shore and was owned by the Anderson family.

Left: "Oakfield" Coila, the old house still remained in 1999 when this photo was taken, it has since been demolished.

*Permission of the Clarke Family was given to reproduce these letters, the originals of which remain with the family.*

 Letters from the Past No. 19

The Letters of the Clarke Family of Coila

1917 finds Fred Clarke at training camp in Sydney. The two postcards below are probably representative of many of the postcards sent home by the young recruits. Fred (no 7458) had enlisted on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1917 aged 21.



22/8/17 Military Camp Liverpool

Dear Mother

I arrived back to camp safely. It is still the same old thing. Tell father I met the chap from Tilba he was talking about today. Tell Arthur I got the photos and don't let him enlist he is too young for camp life. I have not got my photos yet I expect them any day. The strike is not over yet and there is talk of it getting more serious. Was at a picture show in camp last night, it was very good. News is scarce here. Hoping this finds you well as I am at present. From your fond son Fred



28/10/17 Dear Irene

I received your welcome letter pleased to hear from you. Had a letter from Ivy saying she sent you a wire not to come. Well Rene I will be sailing on Wednesday don't worry about me for I will be all right. Tell Mother not to worry about me. News is scarce here will have more to write about next letter will be all about on board and by the time you get this card I will be on the blue sea. Tell Arthur I will write to him later on and tell him to send some photos along. Well Rene I will say good bye. From your loving brother

Diary Notes

October 31/10/17 Sailed from Sydney at 4.30pm for Panama. (Note: Fred sailed on the "Euripides")  
 November 22<sup>nd</sup> A cricket match was played in the afternoon between teams representing Land and Air after some dexterous wielding of the willows Land marched triumphant from the "field" with a creditable record of 1 innings and 25 runs  
 November 22<sup>nd</sup> Crossed the Equatorial line at 7.30am  
 November 25<sup>th</sup> Arrived at Panama at 9am. Pilot boarding at 9.17am entered the Canal at 10.30am.  
 November 27<sup>th</sup> Sailed about 2.30pm for the West Indies.  
 December 2<sup>nd</sup> Arrived at Port-of-Spain Trinidad (W Indies) at 8.30am  
 December 3<sup>rd</sup> Went ashore  
 December 5<sup>th</sup> A party of visitors (gentle sex predominately) from the island entertained the troops in the afternoon with a musical programme the renditions being received with enthusiastic applause, it was a welcome break from the monotony of the voyage.  
 December 9<sup>th</sup> Weighed anchor about 8am for Devonport pleased with the prospect of a sea breeze in place of oppressive heat experienced during our stay in port.  
 December 16<sup>th</sup> Temperature much cooler, slumber more refreshing, appetite more pronounced, tug-of-war on the aft well deck between ... engineers and the A.S.C. After a brief muscular display by the respective teams, the former came off victorious.  
 December 17<sup>th</sup> Distribution of prizes won in the various competitions took place on No 3 troop deck, Lieut. Col. Roberts in a felicitous speech, made the presentations.  
 December 20<sup>th</sup> We are nearing the shores of the dear old Motherland

Arrived Safely Telegram 25/1/1918

Form: TELEGRAM. COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA. POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, NEW SOUTH WALES. Station from, No. of words, check, and time lodged. On the 5<sup>th</sup> EFR. Remarks. Arrived safely. E. Clarke. 25/1/18

Fred.



## Letters from the Past No. 19

### The Letters of the Clarke Family of Coila 3.

Fred has now arrived in England and in this letter he gives us his first impressions of the countryside. He uses the word cold six times.

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**Sutton Veny, England 5/1/1918**



Frederick Clarke

*Dear Mother*

*I posted you a letter the day we arrived telling you all about the trip and the date we arrived. I hope you will receive it safely. I am sending you a cable this evening that is if I get a chance on account of us being in isolation we are not allowed out of the camp. We are in isolation on account of a good number of the troop had mumps while at sea. I was lucky and escaped all sickness, we expect to be out of isolation in eighteen days. One poor chap died while we were at Colon. He was only eighteen years of age. He was buried at Colon and it was a sad sight when the coffin was lowered down from the ship into a boat and taken ashore.*

*We arrived at Plymouth Sound England on christmas night dropped anchor until next morning when we were tugged around to Devonport where we disembarked. The buildings at Devonport are very ancient, we saw some of the old wooden ships. There is a large naval dockyard at Devonport where are dozens of war ships being repaired. I think Devonport a nice place, the trams are different to Sydney, there are seats on top as well as on the floor. I expected to find the country white with snow but was surprised to find that no snow had fallen but here at camp it is very cold and at times snow falls. The ground is frozen hard. You would wonder how the crops grow in such a cold country. We had Christmas dinner at sea it was composed of pork and beans.*

*At eleven o'clock we were taken by train to Sutton Veny camp. As we came along in the train we saw a number of little farms and sheep runs. Instead of the fences being like ours in Australia they are made of stone and hedges of hawthorne. In several places they were gathering the harvest it looked funny to see them making hay in such a cold climate. We passed through many small villages. At the town of Exeter we were given a hot cup of tea which was very acceptable. At about four o'clock we came to the town of Warminster where we left the train and marched to our camp a distance of three miles. The buildings at Warminster are very old. Sutton Veny camp is a very large one has about 25,000 troops in it.*

*When we are out of isolation we are given six days leave. I think I will go to London for my six days leave. We have three months training here before we go to France. The food here is splendid. There is not much sunshine here, is nearly always cloudy and very cold will get used to the cold after a while. We get out of bed at seven in the morning, breakfast at eight, start training at nine and finish at 4.40 in the evening. At night time we have a fire in the hut. Sleep on the floor with a straw tick and five blankets which are very much needed. We get plenty of drill which after the idle life on the boat makes us very weary but we are beginning to get our legs agins. Every Saturday morning we go for a route march around the district. Some of the paces are wonderful and very pretty. This morning while on a route march we saw a place that was erected in 1721 which had the old thatched roof and mossy walls. There are a number of buildings with thatched roofs. All the buildings are built of stone. Every stretch of ground here is cultivated nothing wasted. The one thing we miss here is sugar which is very scarce indeed.*

*I don't think this war is going to last long. I suppose Arthur is still wanting to enlist. Don't let him he is too young to stand the cold. This is all the news I have for this time will write again in a few days. Don't*

about me I am in the best of health. I hope you all at home are well. Expect to hear from home soon. What sort of Christmas di you have. I hope you had a good one. I am very sorry that I could not get any presents or cards to send home. Remember me to my old friends. If I get a chance to get a cable away I hope you will receive same safely. I will now ring off.

From your loving son. Fred

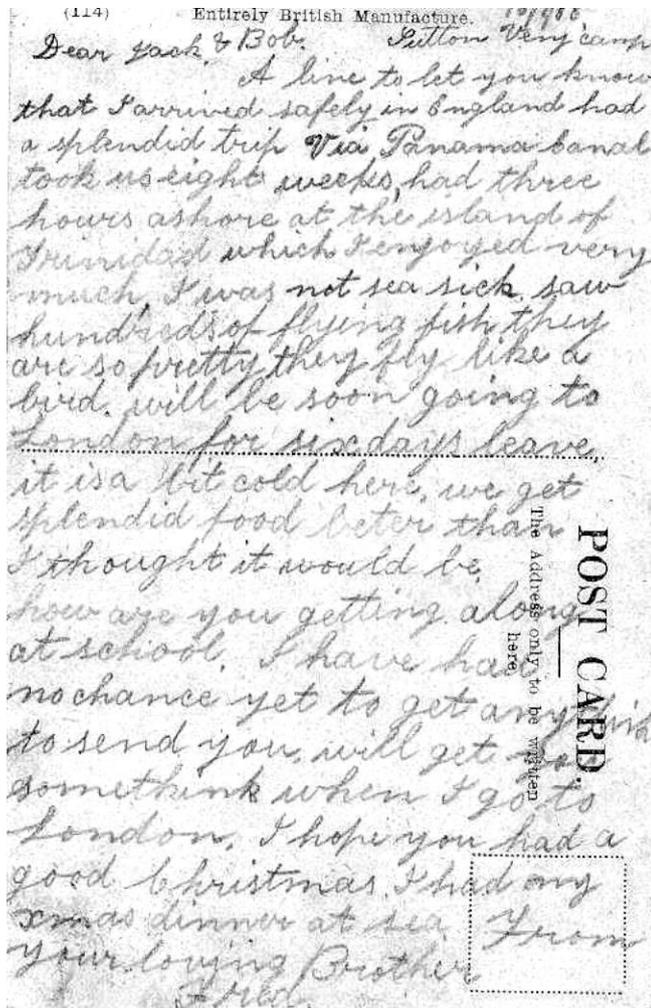
**Sutton Veny Camp**

The village of Sutton Veny lies in the Wylve Valley, between Salisbury and Bath, and is approximately two miles from the town of Warminster in Wiltshire.

The proximity of Sutton Veny to Warminster and the Salisbury Plain ensured it and the surrounding villages in the upper Wylve Valley, were an ideal location to barrack troops for training prior to deployment in northern France. Source: <http://suttonveny.co.uk/index.html>

Postcard from Sutton Veny to his young brothers on 10/1/1918

Postcard from Sutton Veny to his mother on 10/2/1918



**SUTTON VENY CAMP.**

THERE'S an isolated, desolated spot I'd like to mention, Where all you hear is "Stand at ease," "Slope Arms," "Quick March," "Attention." It's miles away from anywhere, by Gad, it is a rum'un, A chap lived there for fifty years and never saw a woman.

There are lots of little huts, all dotted here and there, For those who have to live inside, I've offered many a prayer Inside the huts there's RATS as big as any nany goat, Last night a soldier saw one trying on his overcoat.

It's sludge up to the eyebrows, you get it in your ears, But into it you've got to go, without a sign of fear, And when you've had a bath of sludge, you just set to and groom, And get cleaned up for next Parade, or else, it's "Orderly Room."

Week in, week out, from morn till night, with full Pack and a Rifle, Like Jack and Jill, you climb the hills, of course that's just a trifle, "Slope Arms," "Fix Bayonets," then "Present," they fairly put you through it, And as you stagger to your Hut, the Sergeant shouts "Jump to it."

With tunics, boots and putties off, you quickly get the habit, You gallop up and down the hills just like a blooming rabbit, "Heads backward bend," "Arms upward stretch," "Heels raise," then "Ranks change places," And later on they make you put your kneecaps where your face is.

Now when this War is over and we've captured Kaiser Billy, To shoot him would be merciful and absolutely silly, Just send him down to Sutton Veny there among the Rats and Clay, And I'll bet he won't be long before he droops and fades away.

**BUT WE'RE NOT DOWNHEARTED YET.**



## Letters from the Past No. 21

### The Letters of the Clarke Family of Coila 4

Fred is still at Sutton Veny training camp. The Mrs Ravaillion and her son Will mentioned in the first letter are friends at Turlinjah. William Ravaillion had enlisted in April 1916 at the age of 23. At the time of enlisting he was a telegraph linesman. He was a tall man (5'11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" ) with hazel eyes and brown hair.

In the first letter below Fred mentions he has received a letter from Bert Miller. There is a letter in the collection written to Elizabeth from Bert. It was written from France on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1918. Bert mentions that he has seen his father several times and reports him in the best of health and spirits. I have not been able to detail just who Bert Miller was.

The Tom Davis mentioned in the second letter was a neighbouring farmer at Coila and judging by the remark not someone the family were very fond of. Fred refers to Longleath but the actual spelling is Longleat and the wood in question is now regarded as an important ancient woodland. I think Tom Davis would have been flattered by the comparison, as Longleat with its stately Tudor building on 3,200 acres is the ancestral home of the Marquesses of Bath. Fred must not have seen the mansion to which the woodland was attached.

*Sutton Veny Camp Sunday 24/2/1918*

*My Dear Mother*

*A line to let you know that yesterday I received five letters two from Ivy one from Rene one from Mrs Ravaillion and one from you and also Will's letter, thanks for sending it. It is very good of Mrs Ravaillion writing to me she says Will won the D.C.M. I am pleased that he has I would like to see him and have a chat about old times. I am very sorry that you have not received my photo they promised me they would send it as soon as possible. Ivy said in her letter that she wrote to Roy Clarke asking him to make enquiries about it. They must have forgotten to send it, perhaps you better write to them. I will give you their address the Crown Studios 448 George Street Sydney. The photos are paid for, there is my enlargement and a photo of the 25 Reinforcements 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion.*

*The weather is very windy now and rain. I had a letter from Bert Miller a couple of days ago he is well.*

*Yesterday we were taken for a fourteen mile route march, made us a bit tired, but apart from that it was enjoyable. We traveled by way of Longleath wood which was very pretty, the route going through the heart of the forest.*

*This place is very quiet just as bad as Moruya, we have not had our leave yet mumps and measles are still breaking out, generally a few cases of measles break out when we are ready to go on leave and then we are put back, if all goes well we expect to be going on leave on the 15<sup>th</sup> March.*

*Food still continues to be very scarce over here and greater reduction is anticipated within the next couple of months. We are not too bad off for food but the civilians in parts of England have very little food.*

*Preparations are being made for the big push early in the spring, both the Allies and the Huns are getting huge quantities of war material and I am told that the British have their guns that thick that they are wheel to wheel. It is anticipated that this will be the biggest battle the world has ever seen. I don't know if we will be sent to France by that time if so I hope to get through safely.*

*Our training is still going on the same as usual and expect to be throwing live bombs next week. The gas masks are funny things they are a soldiers best friend.*

*Your letter was dated November 21<sup>st</sup>. You ask me how I am off for socks. I have plenty at present. Rene says she had a very rough trip to Sydney I am sorry that she had such a rough trip, it is rather pleasant at sea in calm weather, but one gets tired of it when he has a long way to go.*

*Well Mother I will ring off now trusting you all at home are well*

*From your loving son Fred*

*Sutton Veny Camp Sunday 3/3/1918*

*Dear Mother*

*A line to let you know that I received yesterday a letter from you saying that you have received my photos. I am very pleased that you have received it. Last week I got a letter from you saying that you had not received it. The letter I got yesterday was dated the 26<sup>th</sup> December. The card you sent is very pretty. There are a lot of your letters I still have not received they are over here somewhere they will come along some day. So far I have got four letters from you dated 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 21<sup>st</sup> November and 26<sup>th</sup> December and one from Rene on Friday dated 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan. I hope Rene gets along alright at Leura.*

*The weather here now is very windy. The country round here consists of low hills and flats all are under cultivation. There is no ground wasted here. Some parts of England is wild with timber which could be cleared and made use of. Such as parts of Longleath wood could be cleared for some poor devil to live on. I have been told that some big head like Tom Davis owns it.*

*You say you had a quiet Christmas. Our Christmas was at sea and very quiet. We had pork and beans for dinner.*

*We are a long time in getting our six days disembarkation leave owing to mumps and measles still breaking out and stopping us from getting our leave we will get it some day. I am getting along very well with the training. Last week we were put through poison gas of course we had our mask on. It is a part of our training. So far training consists of bombing bayonet fighting shooting and gas. After a while we will get trench training.*

*I am pleased you are getting a good deal of milk. What sort of a price is cheese bringing. Have you yet received any letters from me I always write every week.*

*We are still getting very well fed over here considering food is so scarce. I have a fine lot of mates in the fourth Battalion and do not feel anyways lonely and don't expect to be going to France for some time. I always send Rene's letters home she said to always address them home. I suppose Bob is a big boy by this. Does Arthur still want to enlist do not let him he is too young to stand a soldier's life. I have not yet met anyone I know.*

*Well Mother as news is scarce I will ring off trusting these few lines find you well as it leaves me.*

*From your loving son Fred.*

### **William Charles Ravaillon (1892-1918) No 2128, 35<sup>th</sup> Battalion**



Fred unfortunately would never meet up with Will as Will was killed in action on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1918. William Ravaillon was the son of Henry Ravaillon and Dora Peters. Will was 4 years older than Fred but both young men would have attended school together at Turlinjah.

In June 1917 Will had been wounded in action at Boulogne and had been repatriated to England, returning to France in October 1917. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> March he was given leave in Paris before returning to the front. In

April he was reported missing in action, later reported dead by Germany. He died on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1918 and is buried in La Chapelette British Cemetery Peronne. The town of Peronne is approximately 20 kilometres east of Amiens. The Cemetery lies a little south of Peronne on the east side of the main road from Peronne to Roye. The cemetery covers an area of 2,937 square metres and is enclosed by a low rubble wall.



Image sources: [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au) [www.nelson-ww1-memorial.org.uk/html/photo\\_album.htm](http://www.nelson-ww1-memorial.org.uk/html/photo_album.htm) and [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)



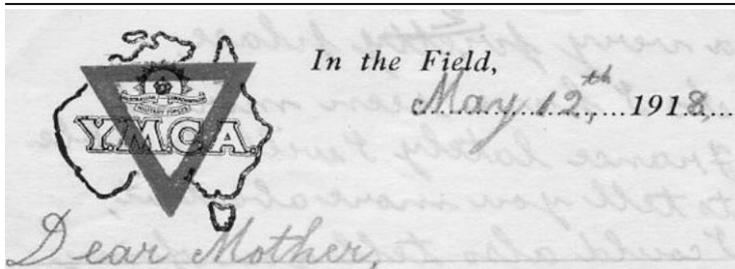
## Letters from the Past No. 23

### The Letters of the Clarke Family of Coila 5

Fred is now in France. He left England for Calais on 1<sup>st</sup> April where the reinforcements were to join the Battalion. This is the first letter from France that has survived.

Jim (James) Bogan mentioned in this letter was serving in France when he was wounded. At the time of his enlistment in January 1917 he was 40 years old and unmarried. His mother, Mrs Lizzie Henderson of Nowra was given as his next of kin. Jim was 5'3¾" tall with Hazel eyes and dark hair. His connection to Coila would I think have been his occupation which was given as fisherman. Jim eventually returned to Sydney and was invalided out of the Army.

We do not know who Violet Dennis was.



*A line to let you know that I am keeping well. It must be about twelve days since I wrote to you last. Well mother I have been in the trenches for ten days and had no chance to write. It was fairly quiet in the front line and the trench was very muddy. We are at present some miles behind the line, and do not expect to go back until a few more days. Where we are now is a very pretty place. As I have seen more of France lately I will be able to tell you more about it. I could also tell you of my experience of Active Service but as that is prohibited. France as I have seen it is a very pretty place although very much neglected owing to this war which has brought all things to a stand still. The country is very closely cultivated. Here you see everyone busy old men, women and children all engaged in farming. They seem to work from day light to dark and there.....(2 pages missing)*

*I had no mail for over six weeks, your letter was dated 21/2/1918.*

*Is father going to drive the mail again or not. I have had only one letter from Arthur since I left Australia and that was the photos he sent.*

*While in the trenches I got a great surprise a letter from Jim Bogan. He is in hospital with one leg off poor Jim. I would like to see him I had no idea where he was.*

*How is poor Vilot Deniss getting along. I would write to her if I knew where she is living.*

*As news is scarce I will ring off remember me to Mrs Ravaillon and family also all my old pals.*

*With love and best wishes from your fond son.*

*Fred*

#### Records of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion

Fred cannot tell us details of his location and the action he was seeing but the War Diaries of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion provide a day to day account of the movements and action of the Battalion. These are available on the Australian War Memorial web site [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)

**April** - On the 1<sup>st</sup> April when Fred was arriving in Calais, the Battalion was preparing to depart from Tournai Camp moving to a camp near Hoograaf, 3 miles from Fuzevelee. By the 6<sup>th</sup> they were moving by train through Hazebrouk, Calais, Boulogne,

Abberville to Amiens from where they route marched seven miles to Rainneville. The 11<sup>th</sup> saw them at Strazelee before, on 22<sup>nd</sup> March marching to Le Peuplier railway siding and then by the 28<sup>th</sup> to the Meteren Area. During April they frequently came under bombardment and had a number of casualties. Total casualties in this tour in the line were, killed 4 officers and 54 other ranks, wounded 13 Officers and 145 other ranks with 15 missing. The Battalion now has 25 officers and 634 other ranks.

**May** – May sees the Battalion in the trenches and by the 4<sup>th</sup> in the front line, south of Meteren until on the 10<sup>th</sup> May they were relieved by the 15<sup>th</sup> West Yorkshire Regiment and Fred was able to write his letter home. While away from the front line, training was carried on at the Rifle range and the Battalion Rugby team played the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion team. Training continued every morning until the 16<sup>th</sup>. The Battalion was now located at Sercus and then moved to Pradelles.

On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Church Services were conducted. A Brigade Church parade was held at 10.30 am. Dress was to include belts, side arms, S.B. Respirator, hats turned up at the side. Officers to wear caps.

After a Commanding Officer's inspection on the 13<sup>th</sup> May the following instructions were issued.

- a) Foodstuffs will be kept in a tin and placed outside the tent between the bomb protection and tent.
- b) Rifles will be kept in the Centre of the tent attached to the pole by a strap or rope.
- c) Tent flaps will be up by 9.30am and not down before 12.30pm.

**June** – On June 1<sup>st</sup> the Battalion is in a tented camp near La Kreule. On the 5<sup>th</sup> they returned to the front line immediately west of Merris, where they remained until the 13<sup>th</sup> when they were relieved and returned to billets near Borre. From there they

moved back to camp near La Kreule. Here life again returned to training every morning and sport in the afternoon. On the 30<sup>th</sup> they moved to Racquighem and on the 31<sup>st</sup> in the afternoon had a swimming parade and at 7.30pm they played the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in Rugby Union and lost 6-10.

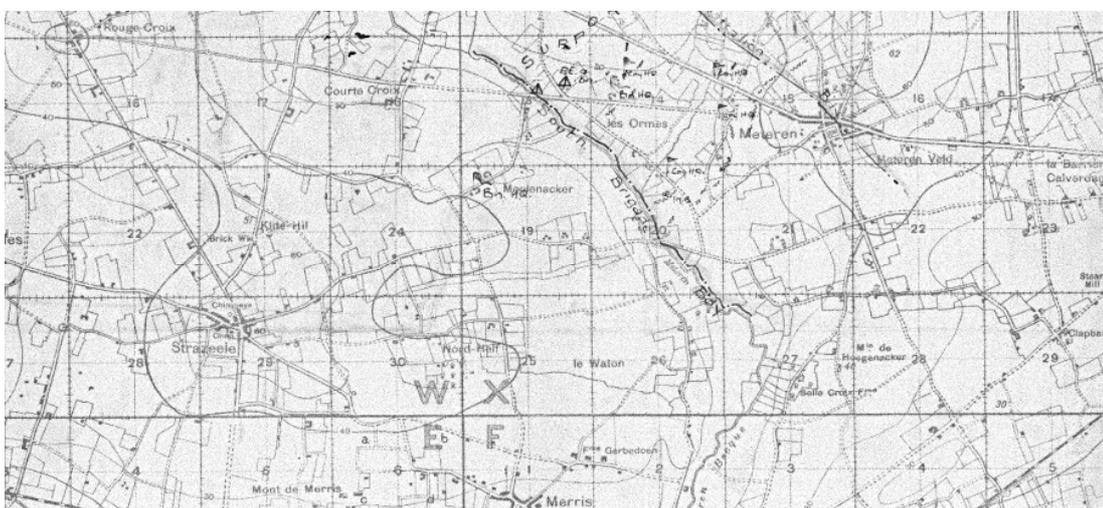
**Training** - A typical mornings training session

0900	Parade and inspection by platoons
0915	Company Parade
0930-1000	March off – Rifle exercises and squad drill under section commanders; Lewis Gun drill.
1000-1010	Smoke
1010-1030	Bayonet fighting and Lewis Guns
1030-1100	Musketry Class; Lewis Guns
1100-1130	Physical training
1130-1200	Musketry; Lewis Guns; Bombing and Rifle Grenades
1200-1230	Platoon and Company drill, and March Past.

Strict routines were supposed to be adhered by the Battalions

The following **routine** was to be observed:

Reveille	0700
Sick Parade	0730
Breakfast	0800
Half hour	0900
Quarter Call	0915
Advance	0925
Dinner	1230
C.O.s Orders	1400
Guard Mounting	1600
Retreat	1930
First Post	2030
Last Post	2100
Tattoo Roll Call	2100
Lights out	2115



Section of Map from the War Diaries



# Letters from the Past No. 24

## The Letters of the Clarke Family of Coila 6

Letter from Elizabeth to Fred 14 July 1918

Dear Fred

I received 4 letters from you this week pleased to hear that you are well. Those awful shells it is a miracle how some escape we must hope and trust that you will come through all right. This war seems to be getting worse and worse. It is dreadful windy and cold here this month we are striping about 14 cows getting about 7 gallons. Every second day Bill Davis and Billie Clarke are fishing in Coila now. Sometimes they get a good catch, they caught a boat load of jew fish in one haul and tore the net badly. Joe Cambey is looking for work now. Got the sack from Lakeview. Wouldn't get up early enough. The freezer is going ahead. Don't get many rabbits now. Dad is still at home. Moran runs the mail with the car. Bob and Jack are getting on all right. Bob calls himself a man now. Artie is managing the Deua River factory, he wrote several letters to you. I write every week, don't know whether you get them or not. I suppose you get some. Mrs Ravaillion sold her place to Pete Davis. He gave £130 for it. She is going to Sydney to live next week. Have you heard of Will being missing yet. I will now conclude hoping this will find you quite well as it leaves us all at present. Love from all at home.

Mother.

Jack says he will write soon.

Letter from Fred 1<sup>st</sup> August 1918 France

Dear Mother

A line in answer to your welcome letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> May which I received this evening, was pleased to hear from you again and to know that you all were quite well. I am aOK and the weather is again nice and warm after having a spell of wet and windy weather, and when we get a chance we have a swim in the small canals which are over here in France, which makes us nice and fresh.

I am again back with my unit after being away for a few days at a gas school, and can tell you that it was a treat to be away from the sound of guns. I don't care how soon the war is over, and I do believe that it will be over this year.

Yes it is sad news about Will Ravaillion, and I am living in hopes that he has turned up by this. I am so pleased that you have received the views of Brighton and I have received your letter saying that you received my cable, two Colon letters and the letter explaining my trip over.

It is not too bad of Arthur going to manage the Deua River Factory and I hope that he gets along well. I have every reason to believe that he will get along well, he had a good deal of experience in the Bergalia factory. How is Bob and Jack getting along. I guess Bob is a hard case. Well mother I will write again in a few days, trusting this finds you all as well as it leaves me. With fond love and best wishes from you fond son Fred.

Letter from Jack 9<sup>th</sup> August (Jack was 9 years old at the time of writing)

Dear Fred

Just a few lines to your welcome letter which I received received this evening and your letter was dated 4<sup>th</sup> June and I was pleased to hear from you. When Mr Linnard first started to sell things he used to have them over at the house but after a while he got a shop built over the road. I go down to visit him sometimes. This evening mum also

received two letters from you and Rene one and Billy one. I was over at Cantlay's this evening and Alick got a letter from you. I hope you are getting on alright. There is a march to Freedom coming around. The returning soldiers are recruiting and trying to get men to enlist and they are going to have sports in Boddalla and Moruya. They are going to be in Bodalla on the 10<sup>th</sup> August and Moruya on the 11<sup>th</sup> August. And they are going to march from the Moruya Park corner to where they are going to have the sports. And in the evening they are going to have a game of football. On Sunday they are going to have a church parade. I have not got much to write about so I will ring off now. From your fond brother Jack.

Letter from Elizabeth 12<sup>th</sup> August 1918

Dear Fred

A few lines in answer to your welcome letters. Pleased to hear from you. We are now just beginning to get warmer days after a nice lot of rain. We have just heard that Willie Ravailion was taken prisoner, wounded and died in Germany the day after. I hope you get that parcel I sent you. The march to freedom recruits only got 1 in Moruya, none in Bodalla, about 20 in Cobargo, 6 in Tilba and 6 in Narooma. It was pretty sight to see the cars go along and the flags flying, they had tea at the factory about 10 o'clock in the morning. Oh that Artie, no matter what you say to him he means to enlist when he is 19. I will now ring off hoping this will find you quite well as it leaves us all at present. Mother. With love from all at home.

The letter from Fred was to be a letter his family were not to receive until after his death. He never received these letters from his mother and brother. Fred died on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1918 from a shell wound in the chest. He was sent to the 41<sup>st</sup> Casualty Clearing Station where he died the same day. He is buried at Daours Cemetery.



The Interior of a Hospital Tent, August 1918 (this was a Casualty Clearing Station)

(The Imperial War Museum, London Watercolor on paper)

**Daours** is a village in the Department of the Somme, about 10 kilometres east of Amiens and is north-west of Villers-Bretonneux.

Buried at Daours: UK 760, Canada 2, Australia 459, New Zealand 1, South Africa 1, India 1, Total Burials: 1231.

24 other young Australians who died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August are buried here with Fred.

<http://www1cemeteries.com/www1frenchcemeteries/daours.htm>



Arthur Clarke never did manage to enlist in the First World War. However in 1942 he enlisted part time in the Volunteer Defence Corp. Artie had married Ivy Costin in 1927 and enlisted from Bodalla.

#### Answers to Crossword

**Across:** 4. Cobwebs; 8. Adieu; 9. Treadmill; 10. Attic; 11. Leadlight; 13. Strife; 15. Ballet; 19. Refreshes; 21. Token; 22. Harmonica; 23. Twain; 24. Breaths.

**Down:** 1. Bazaars; 2. Vintner; 3. Sutcliffe Mort; 4. Caesar; 5. Bodalla Estate; 6. Eying; 7. Split; 12. Hoe; 14. The; 16. Lockjaw; 17. Townend; 18. Choirs; 19. Rehab; 20. Force.