ERNEST EVERY

5071

Ernest Every – a 27 year old, married, self-described salesman from Bendigo – enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 7 July 1915: standing 5 feet 5 inches tall, weighing 60.7kg with fair complexion, blue eyes and fair hair. Having had 4 years' experience in the military, including 2 years with the light horse, he was immediately drafted into "D" company of the 1st Depot Battalion and was transported from Melbourne to the military camp at Seymour.

Seymour

The recently established camp was situated about two miles outside of Seymour. Amongst others it was a temporary replacement for Broadmeadows where conditions had become deteriorated from a wet winter and the troops' health had come into question. Seymour also provided less distractions than the Melbourne CBD. The camp comprised 6000 men and 1000 tents. Whilst in training here, Ernest was made a provisional corporal on 16 August.

A troop's mother said of the camp: "I may say to any of the mothers who have sons there that the way they are looked after is marvellous…the camp seemed to me like a busy hive of bees and that I was the only idle one among them. Everything seemed to work as smoothly between the officers and men; it is wondrous in the time they have been there, and I came home wishing I had 5 or 6 more boys that could I send down."

Another mother wrote: "Notwithstanding all the drawbacks and bad weather, all the boys in camp seem happy – all knuckling down to work with a will, and anxious to get into the firing line, and while talking fight should any dispute arise in the camp and anyone talk fight among themselves the disputants are marched off to the stadium, and made fight it out to a finish with the gloves on…Everyone was busy doing something, drilling, trenching, grubbing, putting up camps, etc. They have a concert tent with a piano, plenty of reading matter, a tent for writing. I saw them pegging off a football ground for a match next day…The camp is on good high, rising ground, and well drained, but pretty open."

Tents at the rear of Seymour Camp.

New recruits arriving at Seymour.

A detailed account was written up in the *Morwell and Yinnar Gazette*, issued 2 July 1915:

At Seymour Military Camp.

…I availed myself of the Railway department's offer to convey visitors over the 60 miles of pleasing country to the Military Camp situated about two miles from the pretty little town of Seymour…
A morning contemporary…announced that the new site was now quite as muddy as Broad-meadows, if indeed it was not worse…
The Supply officers occupy the first clump of tents on the left hand side of the main road. It is their duty to receive all goods sent from town to the local station and they have to see to their conveyance to camp and to the subsequent distribution to the various units. Further on, still to the left, the familiar Red Cross catches the eye; and one realises the grim seriousness of war. The huge motor ambulances are conspicuous, with the hospital marquee and more tents for the medical staff. Here we learned that there were several cases of measles prevalent and that that the patients had been re-moved to an isolation camp.
The next lot of tents belong to the Headquarters' staff. Here can be heard the ticking of the telegraph instrument, the clicking of the type-writer, telephone rings, and the clatter of busy messengers hastening with official looking envelopes. A peep inside an imposing looking marquee reveals a busy military officer receiving these documents and dictating his replies to a khaki clad military clerk, who takes them down in shorthand, and subsequently types and despatches. The last group of tents on the left are occupied by the Engineers, who are busy planning constructional work.
The main camp is situated on the opposite side of the road, and the hundreds of tents make a pretty picture against the dreamy blue setting of the hills in the background. The farthest tents are used by the newly arrived and raw recruits, who are seen going through a preliminary drill learning the "goose step," how to handle a rifle, and so on. As they have not yet received any uniforms they look anything but soldier-like in appearance at present. As progress is made they move into the next line of tents, and again forward until they become proficient enough to be sent away in the next batch of reinforcements. They are even then not sufficiently advanced to be called the finished product, it being understood that further training has to be undergone abroad.
The feeding of this large body of men is a huge task, and we were shown the mess tents as well as the cooking arrangements. The latter is all carried out in the open air, wet or dry, the food being inspected twice daily, and is good and wholesome. We heard no complaints about this, but, on the contrary, all whom we spoke to were full of praise for the commissariat department. Near here are improvised shops where the recruit may purchase fruit, papers, and many of his other little necessities.
Some of the tents display the wit of the occupants by the names stencilled on them. For example, one is labelled "The Filberts," another "The Marmalade Dudes," whilst one announces that a "Housemaid is wanted," and, judging by the untidy appearance of the inside, we concluded she would find plenty to do if the authorities were to allow such an innovation.
Numerous religions bodies have erected large marquees, where the embryo soldier can write his letters home or send kisses to his girl, and some have provided libraries, gramma-phones, etc.
There is a large raised platform in the centre of a big quadrangle used by the men for boxing matches, and a good deal of sport and chatting goes on hereabouts. There are a great many photo. studios, as well as a dentist's parlor, on the grounds.

Portrait of Private Ernest Every, taken by the Darge Photography Company who had a special tent in the Seymour Camp.

Royal Park

For unclear reasons, Corporal Every was transferred to Royal Park in Melbourne on 18 October. Royal Park was another temporary replacement for Broadmeadows, although was noticeably smaller than the other camps. A range of entertainments were provided, including many concerts, boxing matches, and sports: organised by a sports committee that was headed by 44 year old Corporal John Wren, the original owner of the "Wren House" at Burke Hall.

The Age wrote of Royal Park Camp in September: "In many respects the camp at Royal Park very nearly approaches the ideal. True, it is small compared with other camps, such as Flemington and Seymour, but its full strength has not yet been reached. Situated on a grassy plateau, it commands a

panoramic view of the metropolis and the suburbs on all sides. It is an expanse over which the sun shines all day, and is fanned by every breeze that blows. In winter it might be bleak, but it is a splendid site for a spring and summer camp…The lines are pitched on a gentle slope, with sufficient space between them to allow the tents to be moved periodically on to new ground. All the tents are floored, and the accommodation they afford is not overtaxed. Permanent kitchens are being installed, ensuring well cooked meals. Inquiry among the men shows that they are eminently satisfied both with the fare and the quantity supplied. The Metropolitan Board of Works has arranged for a system of sewerage to carry off the whole of the waste liquids from the camp. From a social standpoint the men are particularly fortunate. The Y.M.C.A. has a large tent on the ground, where writing and reading conveniences are supplied, and, in addition, there is a Salvation Army building, and a Wesleyan tent. The sports committee, of which Corporal John Wren is the leading figure, can justifiably lay claim to the gratitude of the whole camp. In addition to football and cricket matches, foot running and other field recreation, a commodious stadium is being erected…Concerts will be conducted, boxing matches contested, and even cinematographic films displayed. To the cost of the stadium Corporal Wren contributed £50, and he also advanced the whole of the cost (£300) of a full set of band instruments…The band has made great progress since its inauguration, and nightly plays the men back to their lines after parade…The men at Royal Park do not spend the whole of their time in recreation. In the early morning they are up and about, and before breakfast go through physical drill. As the majority of the recruits are quite "raw" the evolutions through which they are put on the parade ground are necessarily of a very elementary character, and, as such, become somewhat monotonous, but officers speak in high terms of the enthusiasm of the men and the eagerness they display right throughout the day. The men, on the other hand, possess a regard for their officers, who, they say, have al-ways shown a kindly consideration for them."

Bendigo

From Royal Park, Ernest was again transferred to Bendigo in early January 1916. Upon arrival at 16th Depot Battalion he was demoted to private. The *Bendigo Advertiser* recorded the day-to-day happenings at the Bendigo Military Camp. On the day he arrived: "A quiet opening for another week's work was made at the Bendigo camp yesterday. Daily new recruits are being received, and as the month advances they should enter the camp in fairly large numbers."

Ernest was one of 440 reinforcements to leave Bendigo at 10.30am, 9 March. The troops received a breakfast at the Town Hall presented by the Citizens' Camp Committee, and a large farewell when they entrained for Melbourne. On the 11th, the *Bendigo Advertiser* published an article writing: "It is expected that all soldiers who were in camp prior to the beginning of January will be sent to Broadmeadows on Monday, including bandsmen. Thus all the camps are being cleared. In some camps men have managed to stay for upwards of a year, evading the order to leave with reinforcements time and again. Some have developed into highly successful malingerers, but the authorities at last are searching them out and sending them to the front".

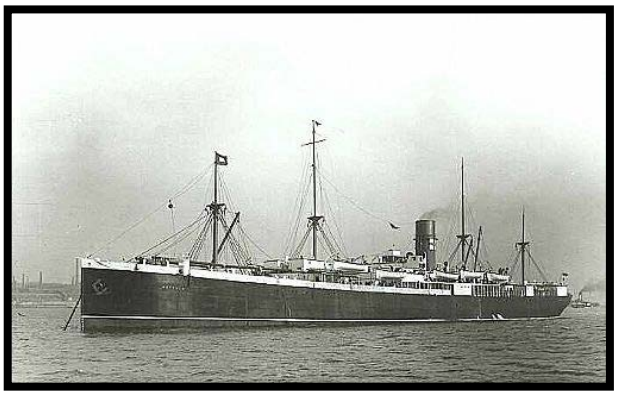
Although it is open to interpretation, there are hints in relation to Ernest that he may have been trying to avoid active service abroad. It is unusual for soldiers to be transferred between camps. Transfers occurred for different reasons including personal requests or special training. It may also be considered that he was transferred for his musical talents, however there is no obvious record of this.

Broad Meadows

Regardless Private Every arrived by train at Broadmeadows, the main military camp in Victoria. There he was taken on strength of the 16th Reinforcements of 7th Battalion. The actual 7th Battalion was in training in Egypt having returned from the Gallipoli Peninsula in December.

Above is a photo of No.1 Tent, 16th Reinforcements 7th Battalion at Broadmeadows, taken approximately March 1916. This then belonged to Sergeant J. Kirby and "Sergeant" Every. Ernest is sitting central with the felt cap on, not the white hats. There is no record of Ernest being promoted to sergeant, in fact he was recorded as a private upon arrival at the camp. However there are no other soldiers with the surname Every in the unit plus the facial features match, and he may have been made a temporary sergeant although it would be a large jump from private. He does definitely have the sergeant chevrons on his sleeve, so it is rather confusing. One explanation could be that it is a joke that he is sergeant of the tent or so on.

With his unit, Ernest embarked aboard A23 Suffolk on 1 April 1916 and was appointed corporal for the voyage placing him in charge of a section that contained between 8 and 12 men. Suffolk was a massive passenger ship built in 1902, weighing 7083 gross tons with a cruise speed of 22kmph. A large crowd saw the boat off from the Melbourne Harbour. They sailed via the Great Australian Bight to Fremantle Harbour. According to a soldier's diary, the troops "huddled in heaps" due to sea sickness and were disappointed to find they weren't allowed leave at Fremantle. From Fremantle, the ship travelled to the Suez Canal via Colombo, Ceylon now Sri Lanka.



HMAT Suffolk

EGYPT

The 16th Reinforcements disembarked at Suez about 12 May by which point the 7th Battalion had moved on to the Western Front. Ernest was demoted to private but later was appointed an extra duty pay (EDP) corporal, a temporary rank, that granted him extra work but not usually the pay to show for it. The unit spent time at Cairo, probably at the AIF camp there established beneath the pyramids, before moving onto Alexandria and re-embarking there on HMT Briton on May 29.

HMAT Suffolk A23 at Suez, in May 1916.

ENGLAND

After disembarking at Plymouth with his unit on 8 June, EDP Corporal Every's record next states his admission to No.1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield House with dental troubles on 5 July. Harefield Park House was and is located about 20 miles north west of London. It had belonged to Australians resident in the UK prior to the war, who had offered it to the Australian Minister of Defence as a hospital. The hospital consisted of a 3-storey plain brick building, some out-buildings and grounds of about 250 acres. Eventually more huts were built on the grounds to accommodate the growing number of casualties, and in May 1916 it housed 803 beds. During its operation it was the only purely Australian hospital in England. Ernest was discharged from Harefield after 8 days to the No.1 Command Depot at Perham Downs to be transported to the 7th Battalion.

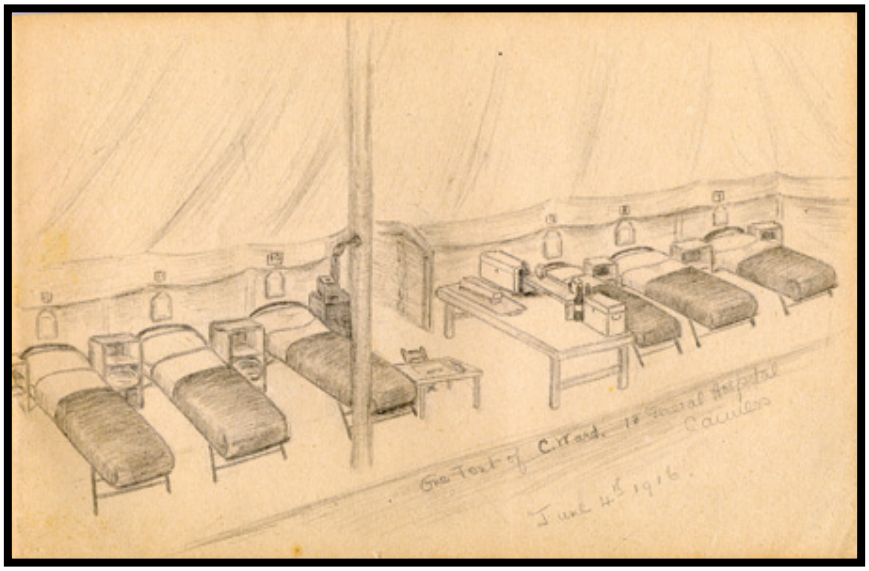
The Lake at Harefield

Soldier's Huts at Harefield

However he was instead transferred to a training brigade in Chiseldon that may have been British. It is here that he went absent without leave for the first time; that he was caught at least. He was absent from Chisledon camp from midnight on 5 August until 8.15am the next morning. He was reprimanded and forfeited 1 days' pay. Next he was with the 2nd Australian Training Brigade, and was drafted to be transported to the 6th Battalion at Camiers on 7 September, proceeding to France from England 7 days later. Prior to departure, he had reverted from an EDP Corporal to Corporal.

France

Ernest finally arrived in France on 15 September. At this point he had been in the army for 1 year and 2 months, and had not seen active service in the field. He was taken on strength of 6th Battalion upon arrival, apparently from the Cyclists Corps. However only three days later, he was admitted sick to hospital at Boulogne-sur-mer where he disembarked, making it unlikely that he ever reached the 6th Battalion. He was transported south to the 18th General Hospital at Camiers with gonorrhoea, where he spent a period of 32 days in the venereal disease camp.



Sketch of C Ward of 18th General Hospital

From Camiers, Ernest was transferred to the 1st Australian Division Base Depot at Etaples, pronounced "Etopps". This was a major base for the AIF on the coast of France, south of Boulogne. Training was severe and discipline strict. Here, Corporal Every was re-allotted as a reinforcement for the 59th Battalion and marched out 31 October.

59th Battalion (France)

Due to the unit diary, Ernest's time with the 59th Battalion can be described in detail. Attached will be the transcribed diary.

Ernest was one of 80 men who were mostly old 5th, 6th, and 8th Battalion men, returned from hospital. Upon arrival he reverted to private. The 59th Battalion was billeted at Dernancourt having being just removed from the front line. The billets were stated to be in "bad sanitary condition". On 6 November, the Battalion moved to the training area at Flesseles by buses. Around 900 double-decker London omnibuses served on the western front as troop transports, ambulances and mobile

pigeon coops. Each one could carry 24 fully equipped infantry men. The billets in Flesselles were much nicer.

Australian 2nd Division being transported on buses.

On 17 November, the Battalion returned to Dernancourt via buses along the Amiens road. The next day, under light snow, the Battalion marched to Montauban and quartered in huts there. The men were ordered to wear their steel helmets and sheep skin jackets. Again the Battalion moved the next day and by 20 November had replaced the British 10th Battalion Grenadier Guards in the front line, the relief completed with 4 casualties.

The next three days were spent in the trenches. The first foggy day the men were busy carrying rations and water and carrying out improvements to the trenches whilst artillery and airplanes were active. Work was carried out again on the second day and on the third the Battalion was relieved at midnight with 3 casualties. The rest of November was spent improving "D" camp and further training. D Camp, as with Dernancourt and Montauban, was in the Somme region where the fierce fighting and shelling had taken place in November 1916, including the Battle of Pozieres.

Soldiers wearing sheepskin jackets and steel helmets.

Dernancourt from the air.

The Horsham Times published a letter from Private Stanley Thomas from Ernest's unit from this period in which he writes: "When back in billets we get plenty of everything. The other day our cook in the firing line had prepared a nice stew, and after a fairly strenuous day we were just getting our dixies ready to go for some, when Fritz put a high explosive shell into it, and blew cookhouse, fire and stew into the air, and on showing ourselves again the first inquiry was, 'Is the stew upset ?' The cook. who luckily was a short distance away, was not seriously hurt, and one man went up and asked him if there was any stew left. He said "Yes." The man said, 'Where?' and the cook said, 'Look over me, you __ fool.' Needless to say, he was covered

in gravy, potatoes, squashed peas, and other things that are sometimes put in stews, and he looked the sorriest thing on earth, with an occasional pea rolling down his face. The poor chap is now suffering from shell shock, and we went without our tea. Our officer had previously stopped us from firing on their cook-houses, as not being sports manlike, but after what happened that order was quickly withdrawn. Now Fritz only has cold meals."

In December, Ernest was appointed lance corporal, an intermediate appointment that realizes a soldier's potential before promotion to corporal. Whilst at D Camp, strict measures were taken to prevent trench foot: whale oil was applied to feet twice a day and socks had to be changed daily. It was the middle of winter, the 1916-17 winter so bitterly cold that conditions froze blankets, clothing, food and drink. It was the worse recorded winter recorded in France in 40 years.

Victor Fagence, a private in the Royal West Surrey Regiment recalled: "The winter of 1916-17 was notoriously a very, very cold winter. And for my part, I think I almost in my own mind then tasted the depths of misery really, what with the cold and all that sort of thing, you see. We were forbidden to take our footwear off in the front line. Although, I myself disobeyed that on one occasion. I was so cold when I came off sentry go, and we had a bit of a dugout to shelter in, when I went in there – this was before leather jerkins were issued – there was an issue of sheepskin coats. And I took my gumboots off and wrapped my feet in the sheepskin coat to get a bit of extra, you know, to warm them up a bit."

Clifford Lane, a British NCO, remembered: "I can remember we weren't allowed to have a brazier because it weren't far away from the enemy and therefore we couldn't brew up tea. But we used to have tea sent up to us, up the communication trench. Well a communication trench can be as much as three quarters of a mile long. It used to start off in a huge dixie, two men would carry it with like a stretcher. It would start off boiling hot; by the time it got to us in the front line, there was ice on the top it was so cold."

Sickness was rampant among the troops. 43 men were evacuated sick from the 59th Battalion on 5 December from D Camp were the weather was consistently described as "cold, wet and foggy". On the night of 9 December the Battalion was marched back into the trenches, completing it at 10.45pm. These reliefs were carried out under the protection of darkness, under strict discipline and precise planning, everything was timed. Depending on his company (subordinate unit to battalion), Ernest could have been camped in either Windmill, Needle, Cow, or Mail trench. The men were issued explicitly dry gumboots, wet ones were to be returned to the kit base and officers were to ensure that feet were to be rubbed twice a day. The troops were told to remove their puttees and instead wear sandbags over their feet.

59th Battalion men in the trenches, July 1916.

Ernest left the trenches for a four day breather lasting until 14 December. During his absence, much was to occur. Men were evacuated with shell shock, snow fell followed by rain and the enemy was active in launching gas into the trenches. On 12 December, a 40-minute artillery barrage beginning at 5pm killed 4 men and wounded another 4, of who 2 would later die of their wounds. The same day a German prisoner came over the trenches. "Much valuable information" was obtained as "he told of bad state of enemy trenches and recurring British artillery". Ernest returned to the trenches, under more heavy shell fire. Another 5 men killed, 5 wounded, 1 shell shock. The next day the Battalion was removed to E Camp.

Major Shannon Grills, OC of 59th Battalion.

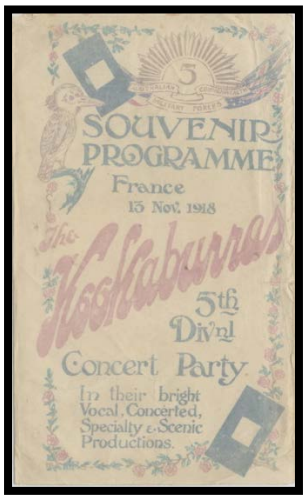
After a few days spent working at camp – telephone communication trenches were dug and 240 duckboards were carried – the Battalion was back in the same trenches. They marched in under snow and suffered a severe frost at night. During the relief one man was evacuated with self-inflicted wounds. The next few days saw clearer weather, even sunshine, and heavy artillery as well as 3 more German prisoners. By the 23rd, they were relieved and back at D Camp.

From D Camp the men entrained and marched out to Ribemont where they were to spend Christmas through to New Years. Christmas was a "day of rest and relaxation" and the men were given baths on Boxing Day. Under cold, dull and wet weather, the Battalion moved to in early January to Vignacourt, a centries-old town about 12 kilometres to the north of Amiens in the Somme region. For most of the war, Vignacourt played an important role as a resting place for troops between battles acting for many of them as a refuge. Thousands billeted in houses or slept in the local barns, stables and lofts, according to the Australian War Museum, and evenings were often free, with the chance for troops to visit the cafes and estaminets, which filled with rowdy banter and merry laughter over plates of eggs and chips and glasses of beer or wine – it reminded many of home.

Concert Party

Capt. W. L. Hamilton.

It is from Vignacourt that Ernest Every was detached to the 5th Division Concert Party on 10 January 1917. This special detachment is not to be confused with the British 5th Division Concert Party, the "Whizz-Bangs". The concert parties program was organised to raise the moral of troops, to raise money, and to celebrate special events like Christmas. They performed all over including London and Paris. By late 1917, it was believed that all divisions had a concert party. Siegfreid Sasson, as quoted by the AWM, said of the shows: "it wasn't much; a canvas awning; a few footlights…[the performers] were unconscious, it seemed to me, of the intense impact on their audience – that dim brown moonlit mass of men. Row beyond row, I watched those soldiers, listening so quietly, chins propped on hands, to the songs which epitomized their…longing for the gaiety and sentiment of life". The Concert Party of the 5th Division was raised in late 1916 and was called the "Kookaburras", later to be known as "the Kooks". They remained in France after the war until 1919 on tour. Many concert parties also went on to perform at home in Australia.



Kookaburras programme from 1918.

A.D. Ellis, an officer of the 5th Division, wrote: "The Divisional Concert Party must not be overlooked. It comprised about 20 men, specially picked from the units for their ability as entertainers. Provided with a piano and a few orchestral instruments, as well as pierrot costumes and simple stage properties, they gave nightly entertainments to crowded houses of officers and men… The Divisional concert party, under the able management of Capt. W. L. Hamilton, the Camp

Commandant, contributed very greatly to the enjoyment of this rest period. In addition to the numerous entertainment given with the Division, the troupe often toured beyond Divisional boundaries for the benefit of other units. In this way many concerts were given in Boulogne and in the hospital centred around that base."

An *Aussie* magazine article wrote: "The Kooks have shown many hundreds of times in the various parts of the line to which Aussies have gone to keep their engagements with Fritz. They know how to mix and serve a good programme of mirth and music. Like all our versatile and enterprising Field Shows, they can transform an old barnyard or a plonker-pounded building in to a quite a decent looking theatre possessing a good stage and attractive props, with a few hours."

England

Being with the concert party must have taken Ernest to England, perhaps on tour, by 9 February when he was admitted to hospital again with venereal disease. He was taken to the military hospital at Hilsea Camp in Portsmouth – effectively ending his time with the "Kookaburras" – where there was a specialist venereal disease hospital with room for 47 officers and 430 men. A month later he was transferred, possibly to convalesce, to the established Queen Alexandra military hospital just north in Cosham where he remained until he was discharged 28 May, after a hospital period of 108 days.

For the remainder of 1917, Ernest was to stay in England and would not return to France until 1918. From hospital he was marched in to camp headquarters at No.1 Australian Command Depot at Perham Downs at Salisbury situated north-east inland for further convalescence. About 12 June, camp headquarters and camps 4 to 7 were amalgamated and named "Overseas Training Brigade" under the command of Major T. Heron Steel.

Soldiers' Huts at the Overseas Training Brigade.

The new training brigade was designed to convert "soft" class men into fighting men to be marched out overseas to France. As Ernest was with the headquarters at its time of amalgamation, he probably remained with camp staff as his stay lasted much longer than the theoretical three weeks it took for men to "dealt with".

For the second recorded time in his military career, Ernest was charged with being AWL by Major T. H. Steel on 31 August 1917. He had been absent without leave from 6am on 27 August until he reported back 8pm on 29 August. As punishment he reverted to the rank of private from lance-corporal. This is probably when he was leaving to take part in the parties with the music at the English mansions, as the camp was in the country-side.

Ernest is recorded with leaving the Overseas Training Brigade 5 October 1917 and marching into the No.1 Command Depot where he remained until 4 February 1918 – probably again with camp staff, as his stay was very long. During this time he had moved with the camp to Sutton Veny where upon leaving he was re-classed and marched back into the Overseas Training Brigade at Longbridge Deverill, this time as a "soft" classed man to trained and sent to the front. After completing his training as a "hard" class man, Ernest proceeded to France via Southampton on 20 March 1918, to again see active service.

France

The boat from England took Private Every to Havre where he marched into the Australian Infantry Base Depot. Two days later, he was re-drafted and marched out to rejoin the 59th Battalion who had been in action at Messines Ridge, one of the most important fields of battle on the Western Front and where the infamous 19 mines were to explode in June as depicted in the movie *Beneath Hill 60*.

He marched into the unit whilst in the Meteren Area, where the Battalion was preparing to enter the trenches in support of the front line, where the Germans were launching an all-out offensive with the intention of breaking the British Forces, including the Australians, and punching a hole in the defensive line. The Battalion marched to and entrained at Caestre and spent the night on the train. Doullens was reached in the morning. A hot breakfast was distributed at Orville. The march ended at Harponville, the total walking distance being 16 miles, and the battalion was now "in due proximity to the new Hun line, being now in the area of the great Hun offensive".

Remains of Meteren.

The Battalion from Harponville marched to a valley in the vicinity of Varennes where the entire 15th Brigade was to concentrate. Brigades consisted of over 4000 men at full strength. Heavy rain fell on the men so they had to be billeted, before orders were received to move to Corbie 18 miles away. The men fell in and marched at 10pm until their arrival the next morning. From Corbie the battalion prepared to move in the support lines on the Somme Canal, and performed so under an "exceedingly heavy enemy bombardment" fortunately with no casualties. The 3rd Division, in the front line, was attacked by the Germans several times during the day, but the 59th Battalion was not engaged.

The battalion was relieved the next day for the men needed a rest and the officer in command had this to say about the unit: "Since leaving Kemmel on the 26th the Bn has marched…[a] total distance 42 miles. We have moved as a battalion all the time…meals prepared on cookers have been available regularly and halts made for meals. The men have been well cared for under trying and strenuous time. The fact that only one man fell out during the whole 42 miles speaks for the determination and condition of the men and when it is considered that since the 27th inst move none than 3 hours sleep was procurable"

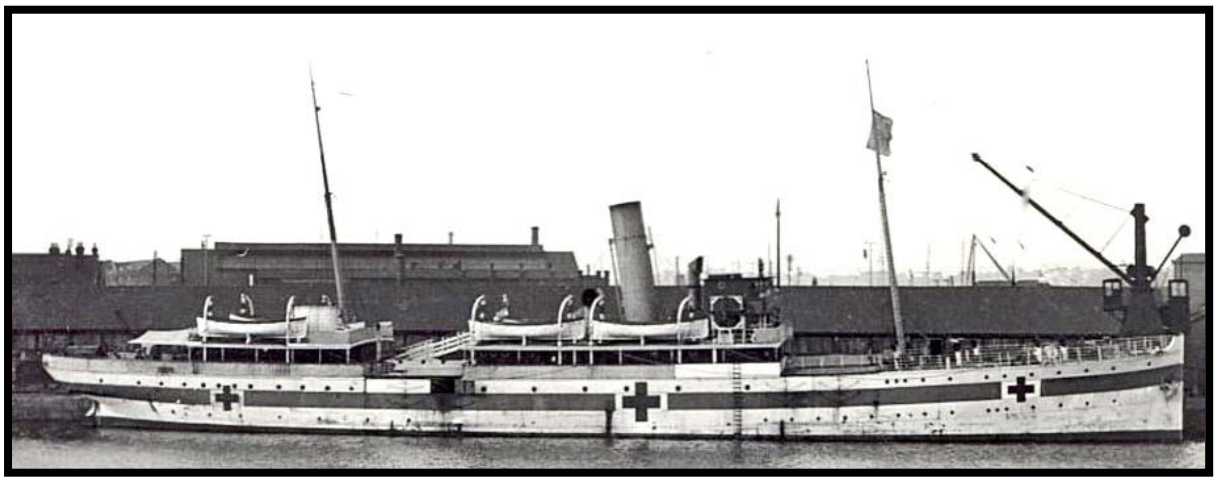
The massive German enslaught that the 15th Brigade was brought to defend against was to become known as the First Battles of the Somme. The British Third and Fifth Armies – which are mentioned in the Battalion unit diary – had fought the First Battle of Arras on 28 March. The 59th Battalion was attached to the 3rd Army during its short time in the trenches. The Germans had decided that the

British were exhausted after four major offensives in 1917, and they were. 177 of 241 German divisions were in France and Flanders.

Ernest started April resting in Bonnay. After a German attack south of the Somme, the battalion was ordered to march to Hamele with speed. The line was under pressure from the enemy. The companies consolidated on sunken road just outside of Hamele. Despite enormous amounts of aerial activity and continuous shelling, no German offensive pushed upon the men. The Officer in Command stated "two enemy and two of our own planes came down in flames. The air was literally full of planes".

Village of Hamele, looking in the direction of Corbie.

The 59th Battalion temporarily pushed forward but two days afterwards were relieved by the 31st Battalion and marched back into reserves and were billeted in a large factory at La Neuville. The men were "in a very muddy state but however are in excellent spirit". Next they marched to Blanoy-Trouville on foot where they were given a rest before they were moved the next day to the vicinity of Villers-Brettoneux, back in the reserve trenches. The whole battalion split into working parties and set out to improve the trenches. The days were described as being very quiet however wet and cold. On 16 April, Ernest was shot in his left forearm causing him to be evacuated by the 55th Field Ambulance to a casualty clearing station. The unit diary did not record his casualty however this is bound to have been a mistake or he may have been shot after the diary was written. From the casualty clearing station – where casualties were stabilised before being sent to the hospitals – he was moved to the No.10 General Hospital at Rouen on 19 April and the next day was transferred to England via Hospital Ship Aberdonian. His wound, probably forturnately, took him away from the battlefield before the infamous Second Battle of Villers-Brettoneux.



Hospital Ship Aberdonian

England

Ernest was thence moved by train to No.1 Southern General Hospital in Birmingham, his wound being described as severe. This hospital was established at the University of Birmingham. He spent a month here and was then transferred to 3rd Australian Auxilliary Hospital in Dartford, that contained

1400 beds and was for the treatment of war-related nerves and neuroses. He was granted furlough by that hospital from 17 June 1918 to 1 July 1918.

On 17 July Ernest joined No.4 Command Depot at Hurdcott from his leave. 5 days later he was put into an isolated camp hospital after contracting scabies, a skin condition caused by burrowing mites that is highly contagious. Cured after a further nine days, Ernest was allowed back into the camp where he spent time recuperating before being transferred again to No.2 Command Depot at Weymouth – a camp that accommodated Australians not expected to be fit for duty within six months – on 7 September. Considered no longer fit for active service, Ernest was embarked on HMAS Runic for Australia to be discharged, medically unfit, on 23 September 1918.

From the "Runic Rag".

The voyage home was a boring one, so to pass the time Ernest and several other soldiers created a newspaper, the "Runic Rag: Official Organ of HM Troopship Runic", containing articles, anecdotes, poems, photographs and illustrations including the landing at Fremantle. It was later printed in Bendigo. Ernest was appointed as the editor. The first three pages can be read at https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/391031
The full magazine could possibly be viewed through special requests with Melbourne Museum.

His editorial read as follows: "The object of this publication is to place on record, in the form of a souvenir, those incidents and pleasant associations which undoutbly relieved the monotony and created a radiance of merriment during our otherwise long and tiresome voyage. It is unnecessary for me to comment on the various subjects, as they have already been competently dealt with in following pages.
I have been requested by "The Digger" subscribers of "The Runic Rag" to express their whole-hearted admiration and respect toward the C.O. (Major A. L. Roberts) and "The Skipper" (Captain J. Kearney). We all very much regret that the incident at Fremantle is likely to cause them undue trouble and anxiety. The Fremantle episode was not promoted by any Bolshevik spirit nor riotous feelings towards the C.O., troops, or ship's captain. We fully realise their unpleasant position in the matter, and sincerely trust that they will not be held responsible for an action which was spontaneous and typical expression of "The Diggers'" regard for the "red tape" methods which have so often been imposed on them, but, thanks to the Anzac spirit, passive submission will never be tolerated in our free land, Australia. Perhaps it is unnecessary to remind readers of the splendid discipline maintained throughout the voyage, especially at Durban, which fully proves that the Australian soldier appreciated a critical position, and is never found wanting in such circumstances.
In conclusion, I desire to tender my thanks and appreciation to all who have contributed to the success of "The Runic Rag."
ERNEST EVERY, Editor.
"Mayville," White Hills, Bendigo, 1/12/18.

Australia

Ernest disembarked at Fremantle, and was soon after discharged from the AIF: his disability being gunshot wound left forearm. His wife, Mrs Evelyn Every had returned to New Zealand with their son during the war but after reuniting with Ernest, she found his drinking had become too bad, and the couple were divorced.

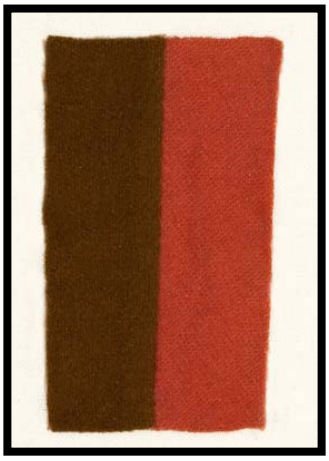
Also, a warrant of arrest was issued for Ernest Every by the Victorian Police in 1923, for stealing, as a servant, £87 10s., the moneys of David Howell Wilcox, 51 Carroll-crescent, East Malvern, at Northcote. Described as a land salesman, 34 years, 5ft 5in, medium build, clean shaven, fair complexion, light brown hair, slightly bald, blue eyes, round face and head.

Further Information

There is still much more information to gathered regarding Ernest Every. There are three non-public records concerning him on the Australian Archives website which must be purchased to view. They may be repatriation records which tend to contain copies of medical records that give specifics on hospital admissions and other always useful and interesting information, sometimes even personal accounts given by the soldier. Diaries written by soldiers of the 59th Battalion are also available, to shed maybe a more personal light on their experiences – these are usually held by state libraries and viewings need to be requested. And if a much more large scale interest is present, brigade or even division diaries help to understand where he was and why.

For Ernest, he finished the war as:

Private Ernest Every
No.5071
59th Battalion
15th Brigade
5th Division
Australian Imperial Forces



Colour patch of the 59th Battalion.

Information gathered and compiled by George Ware.