

Caserne Négrier, Lille

From July 26th to November 26th 1940

July 26th

Went to the Mairie at Escalles, at 2pm and then to Butez's farm where we got on a farm cart with our baggage and so down to Coquelles about 3.30pm. Stayed all afternoon in an open court yard and eventually were lodged on straw in two rooms on the village, one room for the two women and the other for we, four men. Eventually joined by a Belgian. Germans brought us an excellent *broc*¹ full of tea – well sweetened. The brothers Hicks and Mr Crooks are wonderful snorers – sleep impossible – and mice running round near my head in the corner. They gave us a blanket each. All the same, all quite cheerful and happily we had brought food with us – dear old Mme P. had run along to Butez's farm at the last moment with a bagful for me.

July 27th

Horrible coffee – tasting like dirty water – in the morning. Stayed in the billet all morning, under guard of course. Germans brought us a very good stew about midday. About 2pm, we all got into a lorry and were taken to Les Attaques, where we found other English. We had been joined in the morning by Mr and Mrs Wesley, each 72 years old, from Sangatte and, one way or another, our party had grown to 14.

At Les Attaques, we found others from Calais, principally women and children and including Mrs Yule and Mrs Sarginson. Germans gave us some tea in the evening. Slept pretty well though feeling doubtful about the straw.

July 28th

In the morning on foot to Pont d'Ardres, thence by train to Lille, walk through streets of Lille to the Caserne of 43rd Inf. The *ville de Lille*² gave us bread and excellent café au lait³. Men the separated from women and children and 24 of us came to the Caserne Négrier. Found that Dutnall and others had left that morning for Liege and probably Germany.

More straw, snores and mice. Germans gave us 5 tins of salmon for 24 in the evening with more "coffee". Thus they had given us two meals as from Friday 2pm to Sunday 6pm – happily we had all brought something.

July 29th

Coffee and bread this afternoon. Since then hanging about the Barrack Square waiting to be called up for examination in turn. Now 2pm and still hanging about, though we have had about a pint of stewed macaroni each. Those over 60 are being left free to go but they cannot go back to Calais or to less than 30 km or so from the coast. It has been pitiful to see the old people and couples separated.

Dutnall and the others were first of all put in cells at Loss's prison and apparently were generally treated as criminals and had a bad time. I hope that I can join them; I have brought "Lorna Doone" and a pack of cards with me and now, one of the "over 60" is out and will buy me clasp knife, spoon, mug, etc... and make things easier. So far we have had to use empty bully-beef tins to eat and drink from; to get them clean we used cold water at the pump and rubbed the grease out of them with our fingers with gravel from the Barrack Square.

¹ In French in the text : jar

² In French in the text : the town of Lille

³ In French : coffee with milk

Hass, from Wimereux, is also here. I have no news from Sexton.

Old Tom has just gone off, free again: the poor old chap had got very thin and frail and has felt the last three days keenly. He will go to a sister in law near St Omer. Now 4pm. We have been standing about since 8am and nothing has yet happened; getting a rest now on the straw in our barrack room.

The morale of all is high – the women and kids were all cheerful at Les Attaques, laughing and singing. That morale must also exist in England today and it will carry England through or should do. I think that some of the Germans realise it too: their morale is founded not so much on courageous hearts but rather on their ability, being servants, to act as masters and show their strength. Once they get a hiding, and know it, they will crumple up quickly enough and their cruelty to these old people, women and children will eventually turn the whole world against them, if indeed the civilised world is not already of that mind.

We have just learned that the women are decently lodged and fed in a convent school – all very glad to hear it.

Supper tonight was the "coffee" and more macaroni: we could not stomach it so ate some excellent lard which the Hicks had brought and they and I have also drunk 3 bottles of beer.

July 30th

Morning "coffee" cold, so had cold water and we shared out a tin of sardines. We have decided that it was the last night's coffee left over as so many refused it: so in future, we shall all take our ration and throw it away if necessary so as to ensure something Fresh the next day.

Lunsdale, liberated as over 60, has brought me a clash knife, fork, spoon and enamel plate and mug: so I can now feed cleaner. I have a pouch full of tobacco and 2 spare packets waiting. We shall get some French bread and more beer in this afternoon. Midday meal was not too bad – prepared by the French cook – rice and a little meat well seasoned. Hass is getting away, for, although 57, he was a civilian prisoner for four years in the last war.

Most people take me as being over 70 with my beard! A German asked me if 1881 on my carte d'identité was not a mistake.

Thank God G. is out of it: I don't know what she would have done. Men liberated (over 60) are not allowed to go back to within 15km of the Coast, but I think the women can go back to their homes when they are eventually liberated. I could not have imagine G. back at Escalles under such conditions.

Writing is bad, but I have to do it on my knees lying down on my straw.

Nothing has happened today: but I expect we shall get plenty of standing about later on this afternoon. All very tiring and boring: still, we realise that this is just a cattle market and that we are the cattle though we shall never become fat stock on the grub we get.

Jam ration this evening with coffee: coffee, being sweetened, was better. Nothing else has happened.

July 31st

Eight more from Boulogne. Came in last night, including Spencer (the headwaiter at Grand Hotel, Calais), Tim (from the Buffet, Boulogne) and Mr Jones, from the Boulogne Vice Consulate. So our barrack room, previously reduced to 15 by the going of the 'over 60', is now up to 23 again.

Lunsdale brought me more mugs and plates for the three brothers, so now our little party of four is quite civilised at table. We all line up, of course, on the Barrack Square to get our rations from the cook's ladle.

Macaroni stew today – good. The French cook again. We finished off with some cheese, again brought in by Lunsdale.

Albert Hicks has the beginning of a grippe; but I had taken the precaution of bringing a few odd things from the *pharmacie*² cupboard and have given him an anti-grippine tablet. It should be taken with non-alcoholic drink, but that is not obtainable.

One way or another, we are settling down and the improvement in the grab is helping this. The Germans seem now to be getting rid of all the Italians, Spaniards and other oddments first and reserving English as a tasty morsel for the end. We shall be glad to see these others out of it – rather unclean looking and probably unreliable also. In our room, all are English, happily and we have a quiet lot of men.

Tonight, we have to be in our rooms at 9pm and no talking nor light – even *briquets*² after 10pm. The sentry has order to fire if he sees any light.

Apparently some of the inmates of a room made their urine during the previous night, in the corridors. So all rooms are punished.

Salmon (4 to a tin) for supper today.

August 1st

Usual 7.30am parade; we have all had to change our barrack rooms. Previously 23 in my room, we are now 37 in another. Lunsdale came in and brought us a bottle of wine. Lunch was meat and lentil stew – quite good- and I have procured 1kg of white bread for the four of us (3 brothers Hicks and myself).

The Hicks have been through the office today, because two of them had applied for naturalisation last October. I enfeel that they will all be liberated eventually though they will have to stay in Lille – no one can now go within 50km of the coast, we hear. Tom and his wife have just made us a visit too. They have a billet in a fine house in the rue Nationale, bread cards and get two meals a day (good) at a sort of "soupe populaire". I wish I could see some prospect of liberation but I am too young for that, in spite of my elderly appearance. Even so, I do not know how I should live, as the prospect of finding work or money in Lille must be very small. The feeding arrangements have studied down and are better; the WC arrangements are as one can imagine in a barrack. The Germans are pretty easy going – when they are strict, it is because some young fools get their back up. But the change of room – without changing straw – is unpleasant; I itch already in anticipation.

Lunsdale misunderstood one day when buying plates and mugs for the Hicks and brought me three jack knives also. As they did not need them, I am keeping one as a spare and the other will be souvenir birthday present for Maurice and Denis, if I ever see them again. I think I shall, but there are probably many perils in stove before this show is over.

"*Boudin*", tined, this evening. I should like to see a green vegetable for a change.

August 2nd

Another uneventful and monotonous day. Nothing whatever to do except moon about or stand about on hard stones or boards. Feet and legs ache with this standing inactivity and my regions are also a bit sore. Tom's wife came in to see the Hicks and self and brought some food supplies too from George Hicks' wife. We have decided to hold an annual dinner when this is over and to eat from one enamel plate and mugs and with our jack knives, but I think we shall alter the prisoner's menu. By the way, we are not prisoners, we are "*évacués*". It is a subtle distinction, which, in our present circumstances, we are unable to seize. Macaroni stew

² In French in the text: chemist's.

for midday and more *boudin* at night, plus a slice of George's birthday cake – he is 50 on Monday, but decided to advance the date so far as the cake was concerned.

Visits by English to English have been stopped; our bread supply is OK for tomorrow and we still have one bottle of beer and one bottle of wine between us. All the others from Calais – who are English born in France – have been through the office: so now, perhaps my turn will come soon.

August 3rd

Potato stew for midday, jam and coffee for supper. How the cook manages to make a tasty dish of stew with so little meat just beats me. I went through the office today – verification of Carte d'identité – questioned as to whether I served in last war and situation of the boys today. That was all. Then I had to sign – under German translation – one must just sign blind.

We advanced George's birthday still more by putting down a bottle of wine between seven of us this afternoon. We have rather a rough crowd of soldiers – who got into civilian clothes in our room. They make things rather unpleasant, being led by two older hands, who use one – or even two – beastly vulgar epithet to every 4 or 5 words of the King's English. I have a bite – mosquito, fly or spider – on my right cheek, now up to the size of a marble.

Lots of Germans planes and transport passing through all last night – they say the 10th is the day of the offensive against England. The office people are quite courteous. The German sergeant got tight this evening and even wanted to take a batch of 14 French soldiers in civvies to the cafe outside. Luckily for him they did not go, otherwise he would certainly have been shot.

August 4th

Night disturbed a bit by shots outside our room and then down the street outside. Lunsdale has been in this morning and has brought me 2 packets of tobacco and a cake of soap. Soap and matches are almost unobtainable, so I am lucky. Am feeling very dirty but hardly dare change my underclothes and shirt. I am inclined to wait until I reach the final camp when I shall be able to settle down to something more regular in the form of life. I started to learn manille yesterday – quite a good game and I enjoyed the change.

Bouillon and a small piece of meat for dinner, macaroni for supper.

Today, many are getting let out. It does seem possible actually that we shall all be released, but that we shall be limited as to where we reside. Those already out are lodged free and get two meals a day – good – at the Soupe Populaire and also a cash allowance of 8Fr per day. One cannot do much on that but one can still subsist. I am catching the prevailing summer grippe and feel rotten.

August 5th

The releasing continues but so far may name have not been called. If I am released, I shall be the most surprised man in France! I shall ask to go to Paris, make touch with A.H., Stewart and the Starn and possibly Boulogne. But perhaps we are limited to this area. My grippe continues – quite a number have it here.

Later. Nothing has happened all day – deadly monotonous and rendered worse by this grippe. One longs for a decision one way or the other and above all for something less primitive than the feeding arrangements and the horrible latrines – one turns one's trousers up to go in. Disgust and putting off of a necessary duty have brought on constipation and consequent bleeding and my linen is worse then ever accordingly. If I stay in such surroundings long, I'm afraid I shall get rattled – it is no easy matter to face the days

courageously in such conditions. But perhaps I shall improve my morale in a day or two when I get rid of the grippe.

August 6th

Another uneventful and monotonous day. Grippe a bit better, but bleeding still continues – I'm rather afraid I am getting piles through this long period of sitting down on boards and stones.

I now hear that it may be possible to get letters to England via the Red Cross, so shall have to try as soon as opportunity occurs.

I changed to a bed in a corner last night: less draught but more mosquitoes.

August 7th

I washed a pair of pants last night and feel rather happier. Poor result, as I have no washing soap. Am just covered with mosquito bites.

They gave us a plateful of cabbage soup and a plateful of peas for dinner today – quite good. We have now a barber in the barracks and he is going to tackle my hair and beard one day. Have written to Gisele and the boys and now await an opportunity of handing to the Red Cross.

August 8th, 9th, 10th

Deadly monotonous days with remnants of the grippe and continuation of the other trouble too. But now we have had news from Liège, where the others went from Calais. They are lodged in the Citadel, have beds, good food and go out into the town on parole. So, if we are not liberated, we hope to move there as soon as possible.

A day here begins at 6.30am when we get up (all times given are German times, which is one hour ahead of French summer time). Wash, coffee, so called. Role call at 7.30am. Then play cards or wander about the Barrack Square until 11am when dinner is up. Have had burnt rice twice in last two days. More wandering about or cards until 6pm or so. Supper. Role call at 7.30 or 8pm. Lights out – if any – at 10pm.

Barrack rooms about 22 metres long and 7metres wide. Straw along the sides on which we bed down. I am lucky to have two blankets, one under and one on top; sleep in underclothes with my golf jacket on. For meals, we line up at a table on the Barrack Square and the food is doled out by ladle in our recipients. It is a hateful life for anyone used to house comfort and a bathroom – our washing here is done under taps and over troughs – cold water of course; and though there are douches in the barracks, they are locked up and we can't use them. So I am feeling indescribably dirty and look forward to Liège and to going and getting a bath at that hotel where we stayed in 1938 with Allen, Evans and the others. Blankets smell of cold meat. My hair and beard have been cut a bit, so I look less wild than before.

Old Tom and his wife come up to see us every other day, Lunsdale also comes. All these people are very helpful indeed and provide our bread and beer supplies, plus anything else we want. If I do get liberated, I find I can get a room where Tom is – a house belonging to a wealthy man whose *sœur*³ is married to the *Ministre de l'Intérieur*. I should probably go there whilst waiting to hear from the Stewarts. He is probably interned somewhere. However, unless they are both in non-occupied France, which is quite possible. We get the English news in French daily – it is brought by our visitors and when we read the German communiqués in the local paper, we simply reverse the figures they give of planes brought down: the paper read in this way gives us fairly accurate news.

³ In French in text: sister

August 11th

A Church Army man, a clergyman from Norfolk came in this morning and several of us went to his short service in the stables. He took letters, so one has gone to G., one to Mme Stewart and one to Mrs Allen and he says they take about 11 days to get through.

The soldiers English, French, Polish, Spanish and Italians are being moved to another barrack tomorrow. Then we shall be reduced to about 70 civilians. Grippe is better but have still a bit of cold and cough hanging on.

Today we had cold roast pork for dinner and supper, sent up by Mme George Hicks from Sangatte – she has been allowed to return there.

August 12th

Have done some washing this morning – it is not clean, still it is cleaner. We have only cold water and ordinary toilet soap. But my hands are clean again anyhow. The straw makes one filthy all over and I have not risked rinsing down naked with cold water standing in a draught room on cold tiles these last few days. I prefer to wait, even dirty, until my grippe and cold has quite gone. We heard yesterday of the German attack on England and afternoon news brought in said that there were 62 000 Germans drowned and 13 000 deserters – men who refused to embark probably. Down at Escalles, the Germans had all been told that the Channel was only 5km wide and the water shallow! A definite defeat of their attack is likely, in my opinion, to have a big effect on their morale. They are children and spoilt children at that, used to getting all they want without loss or fighting and they are almost likely to cry like such children when they get a rebuff.

The soldiers left this afternoon singing: "We'll hang up our washing, etc..." So now, we are down to about 70.

August 13th

Cold still on but bleeding appears to have almost stopped. Got Lunsdale to bring me in some Oliricyl pills, which should help, I think.

We hear that Maurice Vendrôme was liberated last Thursday and that he had returned to Escalles. The Germans have also told the Hicks that they stand a good chance of getting home also, their situation as big farmers being taken into consideration.

I got another letter off to Mme Stewart via a lorry proceeding to Paris yesterday. In fact, means of corresponding are improving.

Am getting some twinges of rheumatism – the concrete floor under the straw, which is not thick, is probably the cause. A winter here would probably kill the lot of us.

But I am much happier at having got that letter away to G. and the boys – I added Maurice's address in case G. got on a boat, which put back to another French port. I have to consider all such possibilities. However slight they may be.

August 14th

Have written a letter to Hannah ready for the Red Cross next Sunday if we are still here then. There are indications of a move, I think, as the Germans have taken away all the beds (which were locked up) from the barracks this morning. Steady news coming in of the German heavy losses in planes. They have not spoken at all about any attempted attack by troops in their papers – (the French papers are theirs also, it must be remembered) and their communiqués always indicate dozens and dozens of British planes shot down and thousands of tons of shipping sunk.

Usual day of complete monotony. The letter to Hannah has gone – the padre came in this afternoon and took it. He will be here again on Sunday next.

August 15th

Nothing happened of interest except that we got a change of diet with a meal consisting of a piece of cheese and five greengages each. Counted 57 German bombers going over and 18 return.

August 16th

Drewell came in this afternoon – first time I had seen him. He is over 60 and is at liberty in Lille. Heard that Germans lost 174 planes yesterday and were chased home to the outskirts of St Omer. We have a feeling that they are too busy to decide anything about us until their offensive is over.

Tom's wife, with others, went to Escalles and should have returned yesterday, but missed the rendezvous. That is not likely to help the others who are at liberty – it will only rile the Germans who will get their own back on all of us. Mme Bourdon sent me a short note to say that she had managed to pass on my situation and news to G.'s parents in Amiens and given them also G.'s possible addresses in England. She added a little packet of 10 cigarettes. Good folk, really. I am asking Lunsdale to bring me in two boxes of "Pastilles Valda"; we most of us have rather racking coughs and aching bones and I want to do all I can to get my chest quite clear before the autumn. For these living conditions and food will do a lot of harm to anyone who starts off with even a touch of bronchitis left over. The post is now partly re-established so communication will be possible with Mme P. at Escalles and I may be able to get my winter clothes through in due course; for I have very little here with me.

August 17th

The drinking German sergeant and another of his pals – a great big bony man, typical German – have been fired out and replaced. They probably got found out. In any case, we are glad, for they prowled round together at night and drunken fingers could easily have pressed a revolver trigger.

We hear that some English soldiers, who left here for the Caserne Kléber were sentenced to 10 strokes of the lad; that the Germans deputed to do it refused to carry it out and were themselves made prisoners; that the French were then ordered to do it and mutiny broke out; two English soldiers escaped. Tom's wife returned yesterday and brought roast chicken from the Hicks' farm. We are to get our teeth into it tomorrow!

August 18th

Did some washing this morning. Red Cross could not accept my letters to G., bank and father – now limited to 250 words in English. Shall write them again and try and get them away Tuesday.

Chicken is no more – five of us made two meals of it.

August 19th

Blank day and rather cold. We are now down to 54 here but no sign of any general move. Wish we could settle so that I can get winter clothes up here. Several gone to hospital. Hear that the others have now left the Belgian town.

August 20th

Still cold and our colds do not get any better either.

Blank day as usual – we are now in our fourth week in this wretched place. I don't know why, but, somehow or other, I felt quite happy going to bed tonight about 9pm. I had an idea that my news has got through Gisele and the boys and that their happiness filtered

through to me. Imagination perhaps; if so, I am glad enough to be able to retain imagination in this monotony.

August 21st

Hear that Boulogne is being very heavily bombed and that English planes are machine firing the Germans in Calais.

Weather still cold and the barrack room is dark and tries my eyes for reading or even playing cards.

We get a few books from Red Cross but they are mostly rather poor stuff – one needs active brain exercise on something better than detective stories.

August 22nd

Padre came today, so handed him letters to G., Father and Barclays'. He knows Mr Lee Elliott very well – he was the man who should have visited Maurice at King's school in May.

I wish we could see a few English papers and so get an idea of the state of morale in England. I feel that with backs to the wall, their morale will be high and we shall certainly win through. Even so, I am very afraid of the post-war period and fear the English sentimentalists when they get to work again. So far noone appears to have stated that no treaty of peace will ever be signed with the Germans. Yet, it is vitally necessary that this should be said, for the whole German race must shoulder the dishonour and be made to realise that, in the whole world, a German word or signature is regarded as being worth nothing at all.

Padre told me that he had tried to get a word through to Maurice at King's school about me. Very good of him to try.

We see practically nothing of the German office staff, so presume that our fate is still in the air.

August 23rd

News of Boulogne: Bassin Loubet badly knocked about and burning. And a rumour that within a fortnight most of us will be out of here, released on parole, to live in Lille.

Cold still with me, but better and the other trouble has stopped, thanks to Olicryl pills I think.

August 24th

News that German long-range guns have done a lot of damage in Dover. Tom's wife has managed to get back to Escalles permanently, so he is alone here. Learnt – or re-learnt rummy today and played most of the day. Weather still very cold.

August 25th

Have done some washing this morning as it looks as if the weather is changing and is going to be warm; so it will be dry tomorrow.

I must be getting thin for I have to wear my wedding ring on my second finger; otherwise I risk losing it in the straw.

Am not sending any letter today for I believe the limit is one per week and I have been sending three for the last fortnight. But I shall probably get some letters away by the French post this week to Mme Perrin, M. Deguines and others. Had a share in a rabbit pate brought up from Hicks' farm today.

August 26th

Bad night. Ten lorries arrived with Poles and a few women about midnight and the place did not settle down again until about 3am. Ten other English brought in this afternoon. Still no news and decisions as regards us – I don't really know how these monotonous days pass.

More washing done this morning – I'm getting the hang of it now.

August 27th

More prisoners brought in today – mostly Poles and Belgians but a few English men too, all from the Dunkerque, Bergues, Bourbourg area. They have been lucky to have been left free so long. Lunsdale comes in to see me every day and supplies bread and beer and anything else we want – he is a good fellow to do it, for most the old ones, who are free, once they get out never come back again although they are still in Lille – rather selfish.

But such life as this shows up either complete selflessness or complete selfishness in those who have to support it.

I worry a lot about the war because I see many causes for further trouble after it is over. If we are fools enough to accept the German signature on any document bringing the war to an end, then that will mean that England still cannot face reality and that our hypocrisy and sentimentalism have once again got the upper hand. For Germany once again will want another war of revenge. And in addition, France, with centuries of high military tradition behind her, will also want a war to give her a chance of wiping out the humiliation of her military defeat.

I can see only two solutions – the occupation of Germany under the last, for at least two decades, without any treaty at all, treating them as people without honour should be treated. The other alternative is simply the sterilisation of men and boys. I am inclined to think that this second alternative is the only safe course to pursue to ensure the peace of Europe for another century. It destroys the family, I agree, but the Nazi regime has already destroyed families as such by setting the children against their parents.

August 28th to August 31st

Four completely blank days. Weather improving and cough is going, for which I am glad.

September 1st

A lovely day made still better by the fact that four of us got the hot douches and had a glorious swill down. It had to be kept quiet unfortunately, so others have gone dirty.

The padre came along in the morning for the usual short service, which I enjoy. I asked him if I might help in his Red Cross if ever I get out of here and he jumped at the idea.

It would give me an occupation at least and I should have the feeling that I was doing some good for the British cause. Usual washing day for me, today – I choose Sunday, as the clothesline is more free for drying than on the other days. I am getting short of soap and none is to be obtained in town.

September 2nd

Lovely day again. Lunsdale has found a woman in town, who does his washing and is willing to do my darning and mending, so I have handed him two pairs of socks.

The padre told me yesterday that all my letters had gone – I have written Gisele twice, Father, Hannah, R.H. and Barclays'. Hope some of them get there.

September 3rd

First war anniversary today. Glorious day. Hot douches were started for everybody today – some of the dirty ones (and there are many) stayed dirty and did not risk drowning.

A part of 14 came in today from Le Crotoy area – one English, one Dane and the rest, Poles and Belgians. One old man of 76 can only just hobble; another, a bit younger, is also bad. These Germans know nothing of pity or of human kindness.

September 4th

Another glorious day. Much German movement to the North, through the town during the last 48 hours. People in Lille - the cowed French – have their back a bit stiffer these days, since the Germans destroyed their memorial to the hostages shot here in the last war. Still, they want a lot more stiffening yet. Lunsdale tells me that in and around Lille, there are many British and German graves but not a single French one.

Tom and his wife came in today. She is back at Escalles and came up to see him. She says that 12 bombs were dropped between Mme Roussel and Butez's farms a day or two ago and one German killed. Butez's farm damaged too. I had hoped that Mme Pezron would be safe there – the old lady must have had a shock. She sent me up some hard-boiled eggs and some butter, which are welcome indeed. I had posted a letter to her on Tuesday, asking her to prepare another *valise* with winter underclothes for me.

September 5th

Have sent a short note to Gisele's parents at Amiens today. Glorious day again – Hitler's weather for offensives.

I could wish to move up to Liège to join the others for here I have simply no intellectual companionship at all. The nearest to it is a man called Jones, who was reception clerk in vice-consul's office in Boulogne. But he is just too terrible – sparrow-like conversation, a terribly selfish little bachelor of 55 or so, plus a perfect pest to everyone. So I avoid him as I do for mosquitoes. He now styles himself Consular Secretary and proclaims that if he gets sent to Germany, he is certain to be exchanged at once for some German of equal value in England. I can hardly believe however that the Germans have anyone of such poor value available in England.

Others in the room are graves commission men – one of the barrack room lawyer type. Other Englishmen, perhaps soldiers, who, having no papers at all, are classified by the Germans as "*vagabonds*⁴". The Consular man, by the way, was carrying tales to the Germans about such men until he was informed that his own skin would suffer severely!

Again, there are many others, either small *commercants* or employees, who were born in France and are English. Throw in an odd Dane, Maltese, Dutchmen and Poles and that is just about the constitution of our room today.

Of the Hicks, George from Sangatte is the best – a good tempered old bear and quite likeable generally. Henry, the eldest at Folle-Emprise, is the *souffre-douleur* of the family: rather grubby and a real peasant; does not smoke because it costs money but accepts gifts of cigarettes which sometimes come in from outside and smokes them instead of giving them away. Albert is the leader of the band and equally mean – tells me that his wife is very "*interessée*" so I can hardly imagine what she can be like. He is evidently to picking the best morsel of every dish for himself and he and Henry work very well together in trying to push

⁴ Tramp

the crusts over to Towlson (another in our food party) though they don't try it on me. They carve up bread and put the biggest slices at the bottom (when they don't take them at once) with crusts on the top and then very politely ask us to serve ourselves first! Two nights ago, with a tin of salmon for five I decided to squash it all up with a pate so that all could get an equal share; Albert was so disgusted at not getting his choice that he refused to eat it!

George and Henry snore like hell. Still they did not go to the douches on Tuesday. Albert would not go as he has a flannel belt filled with notes on him and did not want to take it off – he apparently does not even trust his brothers.

We should be glad if they are allowed to go back to their farms – they expect this, but the Germans are full of promises, which do not materialise.

We queue up with our plates for meals; some and even many rush back with their first plate, empty it with something and then rush back or send a pal back to get a second plateful. It is all rather disgusting and there is certainly more selfishness than the contrary here.

It is all rather trying but I shall stick it somehow or other. I wish I could get news of Gisele and the boys and learn that they are safe and happy together somewhere. Once I can make contact with them I shall be much happier generally.

The WC's are eleven in number of which only four have doors – rather beastly.

September 6th

Another very hot day. Lunsdale came in this afternoon with my sock-darning lady – her sister is a municipal employee and runs the Soupe Populaire and this one is a shorthand-typist, naturally unemployed – who with womanlike curiosity had wished to inspect this chateau and see what prisoners look like. I was rather confused for this good little lady brought me grapes, soap, matches and chocolate, all of her own bat. Jolly decent, quite a nice little woman – Lunsdale is a grisly old whelk for his age and was arranged in his best bib and tucks for the event. It was quite a relief for me to be able to talk to someone from outside. Lunsdale will bring her again someday, but I told her that she must come with empty hands or not at all – it is not fair that such people out of work should spend on us. I learn that the Hicks brothers very carefully explored all the parcels I had brought in whilst I returned to the gate to chat. And they will probably raise a great scandal at Escalles about my "marraine".

September 7th

Father's birthday, so I shall try and get a short wire away to him.

Rumours last night that the Liège chaps are coming back either here or to Valenciennes – I should like to be with Dutnall again.

In view of this I have done my washing this morning. Gisele would have a pink fit if she saw me at it – scrubbing brush and soap and cold water. However it comes out alright and cleaner if not actually clean.

September 8th

The padre came today for the usual short service. He says he is sure that his message would get through Maurice – and the way he said it made me feel that he was not at all certain of my letters to Gisele getting through. So far as replies are concerned we shall have to wait months – Geneva Red Cross is just snowed under.

Albert Hicks produced a chicken sent to him from home and received last Wednesday: it had gone mouldy but he and Sterrin ate it all the same. A cake produced in the afternoon was in a similar state – these people just save everything up to the last minute. They are hopeless.

They made us crowd up in the rooms again today; so now, we are 37 and have a packet of nine Poles with a harmonium and many personal odours. Why on earth we went to

war for such a people just beats me; of course, it supplied the necessary pretext for having a shot at smashing Germany and Germany certainly deserved it. But Poles!

About 55 young French were brought in from Cassel area – apparently as hostages for the cutting of telephone wires in that area.

September 9th

A rather wet, windy and cheerless day made more sad by the monotonous tunes of the Polish mouth again. My system has apparently got used to this diet – if it can be so called – and I am now becoming regular in morning duty after much constipation.

This must be near the anniversary of that glorious day in the sea at Escalles with the boys last year – I often think of it.

Sent letters to Gisele and Father yesterday. I hope Maurice has had his nose operation this summer.

September 10th

A better day to start with but became rainy later. The Poles and Belgians left this afternoon for another barracks. The Hicks family has received another parcel with roast of pork, etc. so I wonder how long they will try and keep it.

News of our navy shelling Boulogne brought in by Lunsdale.

We had the Hicks' cold *pain perdu* for supper – first time I have eaten it although I have often seen the boys at it, particularly Binkie.

September 11th

A good quiet night- barring the snoring Hicks brothers – in the absence of the Poles.

Lunsdale is working for me outside with a view to enabling me to touch the interest due on my touring agency deposit – there should be about 1 500Fr to come.

I have started the habit of walking just each morning 10 times round the barracks building – 3km. It should keep me fit and free from constipation, I think, if helped by Kruschen, which I have begun again. More distance on the food we are getting would simply fatigue and do more harm than good. I am getting really lean and now have to wear my wedding ring on my second finger even in daytime; and soon I will have to discard both rings and pack them away rather than risk loosing them in the straw.

I must now change my washing day for the Germans no longer wish to see washing hung out on Saturday afternoons and Sundays – I say, it is a sign of the times and that they are starting at once adopting the *semaine anglaise* so that they will all be nicely trained to British rule when our chaps come over and lick'em!

Milk lentils on the menu for midday – today I believe the Hicks will produce their pork roast and cold haricots with vinegar. But even so, I feel partly certain that they will expect us to fill up our tummies with lentils to a large extent so us not to eat too much pork! When it begins to turn they will wolf it down between them as they did for the chicken – not George, but the two others from Escalles.

My morning exercise will keep me in condition for the probable day when I shall probably have to walk home. Then I shall share, put on clothes half the volume of those I wear at present and shall look a new man, that is if the present process of hardening the steel does not make it snap.

We had the roast pork after all!

And today I have had a letter from Noël dated the 9th – his son is safe and demobilised at Toulon, where he is with one of Noël's nephews. The first letter of any kind I have had since May 15th!

September 12th

Did my washing this morning – a hint of autumn in the morning air, but it is a sunny day.

And another real joy – a letter from Gisele's mother at Amiens, which tells me she had received a letter from Maurice, dated 11th June, giving news of all three of my dear ones. She did not get the letter till 11th July as they were apparently evacuated to Brittany, but have since come back to Amiens. *Elle avait aussi* received Gisele's letter of 16th May. She does not say where Maurice wrote from, so I know only the one great thing for certain - that all three were safe in June in England. I cannot understand though how Maurice's letter got through to Amiens if sent off on 11th June. Still, it is great news and has cheered me enormously. I hope to be able in due course to get money through to Gisele, but am thankful that I made the arrangement with the bank for their school bills to be paid as that leaves Gisele with cash in hand for the moment no doubt, out of her £200. Gisele's parents are both well – I am writing today to them again for her mother would like to send me parcels of food if she could and I want to stop this. We are alright here and they will require all they have to get through as there is no work in Amiens for anybody and I have little doubt that the money I left them in May must have diminished a lot with their own evacuation adventure.

I am really happy today!

September 13th, Friday!

Friday the thirteenth has earned its reputation – the worst and wettest day there has been for some time. So the whole day has been spent in the barrack room, which just stinks. It is bad enough on ordinary days being chiefly occupied by half-baked Englishmen, who don't talk English at all and have the Frenchman's horror of fresh air. I also find that my pet WC has a leaky roof so shall have to choose one of the other three with doors this winter on wet days.

Today I had a letter from Romain, who will be going out to Escalles on Tuesday next if the valise with winter clothes does not reach the *Rouleurs* this Saturday. He tells me that the war is well on Calais but along the front and the docks being visited day and night by our aircraft.

September 14th

A much better day so have been able to get out for exercise; had some 15 laps of the Barrack Square also last night before going to bed. This afternoon, Lunsdale came in with my parcel from Escalles – Binkie's valise with two towels, one vest, khaki shirt, two pairs of green stockings, which will be useful in winter at night, my old Burberry and one of the big whitish blankets and a long sack. I have got the sack full of straw to act as a *paillasse* and I shall sew up the blankets to make a fleabag. Had hot douches again today – great joy.

September 15th

We hear that the German offensive has really begun but not much news coming in. Shall probably learn something tomorrow.

The padre in as usual this morning for the usual short service, which I like. Gave him another letter for Gisele. Next week I shall try putting a cheque in the letter for her. He has nearly 4000 Britishers and others to look after in some way or other and he hopes to get the English Church and Institute going. He would like to live in the rooms in the Institute with a pal and would like me to get out to be with him. So he is going to have a shot at it. I doubt whether he will have any luck, but if I do get out I shall be jolly glad to have something to do

to help all these poor devils and more, I shall enjoy the intellectual companionship. The padre's name is Grundy, by the way.

In my diaries I mention few names for I feel that if the names of helpful people are given and diaries fall into German hands, the Germans will be ready at once to persecute such people for cheering up their English enemies.

The two Escalles Hicks are down with diarrhoea the last 2,3 days: their roasted pork turned but they just can't bear to throw anything away and ate it whilst we three others stood off. This peasant "nearness" is just awful to live with.

I organised a "rummy drive" for the English barrack and we have the final tomorrow; I am kicked out.

My family will like to know what is, approximately, my nightly prayer; it is like this:

" Dear God, I thank Thee for once more bringing me safely through another day and I beseech Thee to guard me through this night and through the day to come until such time as I may be reunited with my dear wife and sons. However short a time our reunion may last, I do pray and most earnestly, that it be granted to me. Guard my dear ones in Thy care, in good courage, in good health and in safety from all the perils of these times. Endue them above all with that utter faith and trust in Thyself, which alone will enable them to face their cares and their anxieties with fortitude.

I pray for Thy blessing on my dear father and on those dear to him, on Hannah and Fred and theirs, on Auntie Jennie and hers, on my dear friend John, on my comrade R.A. and on dear old Mme Pezron. And I pray particularly that Thy blessing be extended to all those good people, who are acting unselfishly and who are showing real human kindness to myself and to others.

I pray too, that I may be endowed with more courage, both moral and physical than that I possess, so that not only may I be enabled to bear this trial courageously myself but also be able to help others, whose fortitude is less than mine.

Dear God, bless my dear ones and keep them safe for me and me for them."

For many years although a real believer, I had not uttered my prayer. And my present attitude towards prayer is not simply that of the man who only prays as a matter of insurance for Heaven or because it seems the last resort. Those weeks in May and June just taught me how real God is – someday I hope to tell the story and of my many protections; I will not write it.

September 16th

Gisele's birthday. I hope she has a happy birthday with the boys; perhaps we shall be together again for her next one?

My *paillasse* was not a success as it was too narrow and too short. However, by shaping it into an "L", I get an excellent easy chair with support to my back. My back gets terribly tired with long hours unsupported sitting on forms.

Albert Hicks diarrhoea has proved a blessing in disguise. To avoid wearing out handkerchiefs by washing them, he snuffles all day and then at night he coughs and spits in a tin, now he dare not cough! The other brother, Henry, is in a bad state with piles and very sorry for himself.

Lunsdale came in this afternoon with his little lady friend, who is anxious to darn more socks for me. She obeyed orders pretty well this time and just brought some bread and some grapes and allowed me to buy some butter from her, which she had spare.

Weather is rough – windy and rainy – so Hitler has not got his usual weather for offensives this time. His astrologs have evidently not taken account of the equinoctial gales

period. Another 40 odd hostages have come in from Seclin – including the maire – because of cutting of telephone wires in that area. And tonight, two Belgians from Condette and an "American" from there also have been brought up from Boulogne are in one room. They have been prisoners in some college in Boulogne for a month and tell us that Boulogne is getting it really hot every day. Vigneron tells me the same of Calais though St Pierre is quiet and peaceful.

September 17th, 18th

Two glorious days: good news coming in about German losses. But the usual dull days with aching back, playing rummy. My grey suit is very grubby but I dare not send it to be cleaned in case we move and I lose it. Got two big squares of washing soap today through Tom – very dark brown colour but Tom says it works.

Two more Englishmen in, from Montreuil, today, nearly eight weeks later than us.

September 19th

A day of many visits, which has passed very quickly. First of all, Lunsdale with Mrs Sarginson and her little girls – she brought me a currant loaf. She is at Marcq-en-Baroeuil, where she has a friend's house for the moment. So far, she has no news of Tom. Then the padre: his little effort to get the church open is meeting with some opposition from the Gestapo. And finally, a Mlle Dutilleul, a cousin of the Brosselles' at Fréthun. In addition, I have a letter from Mr Deguines: he wants to know if I require any money. If I do borrow any from him, I shall make a note of it in this diary and it must be noted and paid if anything happens to me.

September 20th

Today I have a letter from Gisele's mother and she gives me the news of the location in England of Gisele and the boys. I gather that Maurice is in Cornwall, Denis at Sidmouth and Gisele at Teignmouth. I think it pretty safe country for them although any seaside place, these days, on east or south coast must involve a certain risk, which I hope is small.

Have done my washing today with a piece of very dark brown washing soap- however it lathers alright.

Grand-mère says they have bread and also the "Soupe Populaire" daily- it is apparently quite passable as indeed it is outside of Lille too. I have lost a waistcoat button today – if the Germans notice its loss they would be quite capable of filming me for propaganda purposes as showing how well fed their prisoners are, as evidence by lacking button!

September 21st

Douche day – so I feel clean and a new man again; the effect does take long to work off in this dirty straw, with all its dust.

I expect Maurice returned to King's school yesterday, as they always seem to begin on Fridays. And Binks will either have gone a day or two earlier or will be going next Tuesday. So Gisele will be alone again and will feel the separation still more in my absence.

George Hicks, from Sangatte, has got a parcel from home: he will not be like the others, as he prefers fresh meat to mouldy stuff. So tomorrow, we are in for a feast with cold potatoes and one of my salads. I always get some green stuff in via Lunsdale every week. Even that is not enough and I feel that if I ever get out of here, my first day would be spent simply grazing in some clear field!

Lunsdale – 67 years of age- has been a stout friend and most devoted. He is an interpreter at Calais-Maritime. He comes up here every day except Sundays. I hope to be able to reward him some day. Another over 60, a mason, evidently knows little of brotherhood and service, for he has not put in an appearance since he left 8 weeks ago and just sends his kind regards via Lunsdale, once a week. If I fail to get through this racket I recommend Lunsdale to my family for all time.

September 22nd

The RAF seems to have been busy this way for the last three nights – it sounds as if they are trying to get the petrol dump at Croix – but we still wait for the roar of the explosion, which will certainly follow a direct hit.

I am spending part of today converting a bully beef tin into a jerry for use at night. It is no fun having to turn out in pitch-blackness and tumble through the barrack room into perhaps a beastly night and risk getting bad colds that way.

The padre has been in as usual today and he and I got rather a long chat together. He has had an operation recently and is not very fit; actually, there is a talk of a stomach ulcer and he fears cancer. He has lost his eldest son and knew nothing of the fate of the two others until last week, when a chance meeting a train brought him in contact with a woman who had visited British wounded at Montreuil hospital. At the top of the list of 70-80 names was that of his second son, slightly wounded.

Our RAF have a clinique round this way; the Germans tell stories in the papers of dead babies, etc. but it appears that the thirty dead carried out were babies of 5'6" to 10ft tall!

September 23rd

Had a letter from Mme Vendrôme today, saying she was writing for Mme Pezron and that all was OK.

Another group of 19 hostages for telephone wire cutting, from Berck-Plage, including a *curé*!

September 24th

Uneventful day so far, though the German guards have had a football match on the Barrack Square with the French – they stipulated no British players. The Hicks have found a cousin in Lille, who is going to bring us a *ragout de mouton*⁵, all hot on Saturday.

The *Fisc* pursues one even into captivity and I have received a demand for payment of a *taxe de transaction* from March to August. My other matter, interest on my agency deposit is coming through – about 900Fr – is due to 21/9/40 and I shall get it in a few days now, giving a *procuration* to Lunsdale to get it for me.

This afternoon, I had a visit from a Mme Marcant, a Red Cross nurse, who came to represent Mr Maeght and to offer me on his behalf just anything I wanted – food, money, etc... It is jolly good of him. One way or another I am getting quite a collection of friends outside.

September 25th

Rather blank day and am getting rather miserable with another cold – am doing the usual stuff to get rid of it – Olirycil, camphor oil and pastilles Valda. I am beginning to be worried about my backache as it is concentrating on the under side of the right breast and goes right through to the opposite place in the back.

⁵ Mutton stew

September 26th

My "*marraine*⁶" came in with Lunsdale today and brought a pot of jam, some *Gruyere* cheese, sugar, bread and cocoa. She is a good kid and will not take any notice of my repeated injunction to come with empty hands.

The Hicks' cousin brought in the ragout de mouton today, so we fed with at 11am and have enough potatoes and broth to heat up for 6pm. The intervening time between 11am and 6pm, we get twice a week a visit from a group of girls in a village 15km away – Annoeuillin, I think. They bring 500 sandwiches of *pain et pate* with them, on their bikes. Stout work and it shows that the women of this country still have some guts, even if the men have not.

This evening, Mlle Dutilleul came in and brought a big bag of small plums very incontinent, some *Princesse* haricots and oil and vinegar all prepared for tomorrow. All these people are just great and go to infinite trouble to do something for us. If I do not get through, my family must make them all some little gifts in token of their kindness to me – not money.

September 27th

Nothing at all to say about today, except that it has passed in anticipation of the hot douches tomorrow.

September 28th

Another Hicks parcel today, with butter, cooked beefsteaks and Princesses and some plums and apples. One way or another between their farms, their cousin in Lille, my three "*marraines*" and Lunsdale, we are beginning to get organised and doing well. My three "*marraines*" are Lunsdale's Lille Friend, the cousin of the Brosselles and the Red Cross nurse, representing Maeght. I have decided now to put down addresses of these people so that, if I don't get through, my family will still know how to find them and thank them.

Hot douches today – the real cat's whiskers! News of 143 German planes down yesterday.

Usual disputes about open and closed windows all day.

September 29th (letter n°1 sent)

Quick day. Padre's service this morning. He tells me he is certain that his message got through Maurice at King's. Gisele will perhaps wonder why the news got there first as regards my safety for I think it possible that she received no letters at all from me. But the padre got Maurice's address from an envelope addressed to Gisele at the bank to be sent on to Maurice at King's if bank could not deliver. In any case, I have started to number my letter, commencing with that sent today as n°1. Then it will be easy to see if Gisele gets the lot.

September 30th

Cold day, but I took more exercise and got well warmed up. Sent some washing, which I failed at via Lunsdale to my "*marraine n°1*" and she came in to see me this afternoon and bring me some darned socks back. Thank goodness, she had really obeyed this time and came empty handed – it is not fair that such people should spend money on us when they must be short themselves or may be, later on. Now she understands, I think and will let me pay her for things she brings in the future; a much better arrangement generally all round, as I do not like such obligations on the one hand, whilst on the other hand I feel pretty certain that the civil population will eventually find the food question very difficult and also very

⁶ Godmother, in wartimes

expensive. Too many chaps here cry "misery" to get sympathy and extra food, instead of paying their own way decently and fairly.

October 1st

Tried my new fleabag last night – quite a success, as it is long enough to well cover head and ears, so that snoring less disturbs me. More disputes about the window last night – some insist on it being opened and others on it being closed and each party is equally obstinate in trying to force its ideas on the other. In fact- or so I tell – want to be Hitler and dictate to the others.

October 2nd

Nothing much today except that there is a strong rumour in town that some of the English free in town are to be sent to St Amand on Friday. Have arranged to send 400Fr by mandat to Gisele's mother as I have received the interest due to me on Monday.

October 3rd

Lunsdale has been in this morning – it is definite that he is one of those ordered to St Amand and he leaves tomorrow. It appears that all those who are receiving free meals and 8Fr per day from the town are being moved on. I am very sorry for Lunsdale and he is very cut up about going too. I have given him a note of introduction to Raoul Denizon of the Stane in case he still goes to St Amand. The Hicks' cousin brought us a *ragout de mouton*, which lasted us the day quite well: very good. But I don't want too many of such luxuries and prefer to stick as far as possible to the regime, so that if we get moved elsewhere where conditions are harder, I shall be well trained to stand it. Tomorrow we are to get new straw at last and have a general clean out. I wish we had some lighting – the barrack room is very dark. I am in bed now, about 8pm, German time, which is 6pm sun time; we still get up at 7am German time.

October 4th

We have cleaned out barrack rooms and burnt all the old straw – it was time it was done, for it was all shorts and full of dust. And now we have arranged our beds so that there is a pathway between two lots of straw. Thus we need not tread on it to reach our shelves and it also creates one neutral zone between Henry Hicks and myself, which is a godsend as he snores with a series of puffs, which all come my way. And the whole of this dirty work has been followed up by hot douches, so am feeling clean again. Mlle Dutilleul came in yesterday to see me. She is a schoolmistress here I think. She tells me that the Brosselles at Fréthun have a munitions dump on their property – I am sorry for them.

October 5th

Today I have had a visit from Miss Carte, who is doing a lot of good work in Lille. She tells me that the British hospital cases are moving tomorrow to Belgium and that our padre, Mr Grundy is going too. I am sorry to loose this Friend.

Then the Hicks' cousin came in and as they were out on the coal fatigue I stayed to chat with her and meanwhile, my "*marraine n°1*", Mlle Carlier, came in and joined us till 6pm. So, one way or another, the day passed quickly enough.

I still seem to be using a lot of handkerchiefs with a bit of cold, but it has not gone to my chest at all. Perhaps now that we have new straw and lest dust, things will be better. But back and ribs, both fore and aft, are very painful; it is definitely rheumatism.

October 6th

Could not write to Gisele today as the padre left but shall try and get a letter away this week somehow or other.

This afternoon visits were stopped entirely by order of the Kommandantur. But our German guards apparently thought it unjustified and turned Nelson's blind eye on our discrete conversations with our visitors at the far end gate, talking through chinks in the gate or doors.

The two sisters Carlier came to see me and brought in jam, pate and cheese, which I had asked for – now I pay for this and so am happier about it.

October 7th, 8th

Quiet days. Still no visits allowed. Lovely day, Monday. Tuesday, it poured hard most of the day.

October 9th

The general commanding at Lille visited the camp today: nothing new, but he is going to go into the question of visits apparently. Tonight we get electric lights, so I shall probably be able to stay up till 10pm or so.

Actually, I like the long nights, as I am often awake and thinking of Gisele and the boys.

Had a letter from Romain and another from Brosselles today. Noël is leaving Calais for Béthune, I hear – he is wise to do so. Also got a letter dated 21/09/40 from Barclays' saying they are open in Paris. Once I make contact with them and get permission to have a monthly sum, I shall probably be able to arrange that they send a monthly *mandat* to Gisele's parents.

More hostages in today for telephone cutting, so our room is filling up again. I am glad of my corner, which keeps me free of fresh contacts, which at the moment are always unknown.

Again strong rumours that we are going out – release. I do not believe it.

October 10th

Still more hostages this morning and our room is now nearly 40. Electric light last night was a great success. Long October day – like those that Gisele and I had at Beaulieu together. Another Englishman – Johnson – has come in today from St Omer. Actually he is an Australian, who lived in Brussels and came through to his wife's people during the invasion – seems a decent sort and an educated man, but he is in another room so shall not be likely to see much of him.

October 11th

Another glorious October day. Most of the Cassel hostages left yesterday but I expect we shall continue to have batches in regularly.

Have had a bad day with the pain in my chest and back – it seems to go right through from front to back. No doctor here and the English hospital has been moved since last Sunday. The French *infirmier*⁷ is not much use trying so I must just hope that it goes off.

⁷ Nurse

My "marraine n°2", cousin of the Brosselles- made her Thursday visit and sent me some more plums and a *purée de légumes*⁸ all hot. We could not talk however and all I could do was just to wave "thank you" to the gate.

October 12th

Mlle Carlier sent me in my parcel of things, which I had asked her to get. Still no visits allowed, so did not see her. Had letters from Romain and from Grand-mère today, the latter giving the English addresses of Gisele and the boys in June. It looks as if Gisele had taken a room or rooms at Mrs Bragg's, but I hope she is more comfortable now and has something better – although in many ways she would be happier in rooms and get a little more company that way.

Jones, the vice-consular clerk is getting ragged a lot and has a temperament, which cannot stand it, for he has the brain of an unenlightened hoop-sparrow, the self-importance of a dictator and the vindictiveness of a stoat. Naturally noone will ever forgive him his attempt at sneaking on ex-soldiers here- men in civvy clothes of course – some time ago. But the room is getting unpleasant.

October 13th

Had a short service this morning from the new Englishman – Johnson – who is a lay preacher. And had a sit down lunch with 7 others – pate, salmon, cold chicken, *crème de gruyère*, cake and an apple. A terrific meal in these days. Lovely October day, so have worked off most of the meal on the Barrack Square. Have cleaned the cards with petrol and talc, but not so well as the boys used to do it. Still no opportunity of writing to Gisele as no Red Cross is now available to us.

Mr Jones caused more unpleasantness by refusing to take his turn at sweeping out our half of the room after meals. We take it in turn but he wants to put it on the young French hostages instead. They have enough to do at present for all those under 30 do the barracks general fatigues so it is only fair that the older men do the rooms. However, Mr Jones is going to get orders from elsewhere and will have to turn to.

October 14th

Anniversary of our wedding day – and probably Gisele like myself is thinking of the comparison between today and that other day 16 years ago. Have heard from Lunsdale – he is now at Raismes, near St Amand and there are no Germans there at all. He is settling down again with an English married couple, who left Lille at the same as he did.

October 15th - Letter n°2

Glorious day. Did some washing but there is so much stealing going on – certainly the young French hostages – that I no longer leave it out to dry but hang it on strings I have arranged under my shelves. It smells a lot of stale tobacco when dry but I prefer that to losing it.

News today that all parcels and correspondence are to be stopped also. So this means getting down to the rations they give us entirely and I am rather glad I have pretty well trained myself to it in the last 11 weeks. Though I expect some means of getting parcels in will be found all the same as also letters.

⁸ Vegetables

Today I gave letter n°2 to the Germans to see if they would get it sent off to Gisele – they said they would try. But now if she writes to me, I shall not get her letters. I hope the letter with cheque got through to her safely.

October 16th

Today we are really on the prison regime and eating the mouldy German bread. Already many are grumbling and there is little patriotism to be found among these Englishmen – so called. Most of them really do not care much what happens so long as the war ends soon and they can get out. A War Graves Commission gardener from Etaples cemetery, named Thomas, told me without shame at all how Germans visited the cemetery while he was there and gave him tips! Obviously it is not much use expecting patriotic feeling from such mentality.

An effort is being made to get the parcel question settled. If it fails, I think we shall put in a petition to the Germans, with copy to the American consul, asking for treatment similar to that accorded to Germans in the internment camps at home. But we may not be able to get a majority vote in favour of such a petition because many are just Frightened of being moved on elsewhere as a consequence – a gutless lot mostly.

Glorious day again but the weather looks to me likely to change soon.

Have started reading Maurice's Lorna Doone.

October 17th

Binkie's birthday – these anniversaries count for so much now – and he has begun his teens. Well, perhaps next year we shall be together again to spend it at his school.

A day of German rations – for us. Their own grub is very good indeed. I believe they get one hot meal a day, but get 2 Marks, 40Fr, so that they can live on the country for the other two meals. Midday was boiled barley with a slight flavour of meat and the barley was not cooked; whilst we get about 250g of their sour German bread each, per day and either a spoonful of jam or some tinned fish for supper – their fish is pretty good. But most of the men are feeling pretty miserable on this diet and tempers are a bit short all round, too.

With two Englishmen I have drafted out a form of request for better treatment. 4/5 of the men have voted for it going in today but they may well change their minds by tomorrow! The Germans have a reputation for not liking petitions of right and many fear that the result will be that we are moved on elsewhere – perhaps to Germany.

October 18th

Miserable wettish day. Midday soup, lentils, quite tasty. We still do not know whether the petition will go in tomorrow morning.

Parcels have been coming in over the wall yesterday and today, handed over by a cord and home made hook.

October 19th

A surprising morning. All waked at 6am and told to parade at 7.30 and the French hostages only to parade with their kit packed. So off they went – we think to Loss's prison; a noisy lot, much mixed and we were glad to see them go. At another parade at 9pm, it was announced that we remaining English – about 70 of us – have our visits and parcels allowed again. A yell of joy went up and after parade one delegation went with me to express our thanks politely to the Germans. This move has resulted in another changing over of rooms and 17 of us are moving in another smaller room, having at last got rid of the noisier elements and of Mr Jones. Much washing and brushing and putting up of shelves and we move in tomorrow

morning – I have bagged a corner as before. Then followed a very welcome hot douche. Finally a visit from Mlle Carlier with tobacco and other addments. My last letter (n°2) to Gisele is approved by the Germans and will be taken to the Red Cross when they know the address. So Mlle Carlier will find out and let me know tomorrow.

One man has been caught picking other men's parcels: he has been suspected for some time and the Germans and others laid a trap for him. He has been put in the penitentiary cell and it will go hard with him – he deserves all he gets.

Had a letter from the bank this morning in Paris, saying the Germans have authorised them to send the 1000FrS via the PTT so that will probably be here soon. And I can then arrange something, no doubt, for Gisele's parents, a regular, monthly sum, which will go on being steadily paid, even if I am sent elsewhere. But the bank will have to get permission from the Germans. And I shall go very carefully in case it interferes with their arrangements (Gisele's parents) as regards free bread and the *Soupe Populaire*.

October 20th

Finished our moving from n°6 to n°4 room in the morning and got very dirty. Now rather cramped but the room is lighter and more cheerful.

The two Mlles Carlier came in to see me this afternoon and had managed to raise 10 packets of tobacco and 10 packets of cigarettes – all are getting scarce again, so we hear. So we are all stocking as much as we can get. Found out address of Red Cross, so my letter to Gisele will go tomorrow.

October 21st

About 28 went off in two lorries this morning for the Dunkerque-Calais-Boulogne area to obtain their winter clothing. So very few of us left here to do the usual morning fatigues and only 5 in my room for dinner. The others will no doubt be back late tonight.

Miss Curt came in to see me this afternoon for half an hour's chat – a very pleasant woman and who is just working like a nigger, trying to do some good to the Britishers free in Lille. She looks as if she is wearing herself out. I hear that Italians are now coming into Lille and the North generally – the French must just hate it like poison for they must love the Italians even less than the Germans.

October 22nd

The lorry party came back about 8.30pm last night, fagged out with 350km on the road on plank seats and all fed up, as they were not allowed more than 10 minutes at their homes. Poteau – an employee of Whinot – found his house flat and burnt out. Coleman, an employee at the Buffet, found all his clothes and everything else stolen. One man, living at Arques, was driven right past the door of his house. And all, after their lorry ride on hard forms no longer wish to sit down!

October 23rd

Mr Spencer of Dunkerque came in to see me yesterday and today and brought me some Thermapene wool I had asked for, plus some more toilet paper. I prefer to keep a good stock of the latter, for I dread the day when I am reduced to the sort of odd bits of paper found here. I seem to be getting a lot of constipation and have been taking rhubarb pills each night for nearly 3 weeks now, so as to reduce the possibility of recurrence of the piles trouble. With constipation, piles, rheumatic pain and bad teeth I am in need of a good general overhand. I

have asked that I be visited by the doctor when next he comes – but he is a youngster of the French army and I have little faith in him.

My registered letter from Barclays' containing 1000Fr, supposed to leave Paris on the 16th is not yet there, so Mr Spencer has taken a letter from me to the *Receveur des PTT* asking about it. Meanwhile I have informed the bank too.

October 24th

The food has been better and more plentiful these last few days, since the French hostages left and has of course been supplemented by parcels brought back by Hicks and others last Monday.

Today a strong rumour is going round that we shall be moved to Germany before the winter sets in. It came from the kitchen, brought there by the French sergeant, who was told – so he said – by the Gestapo here, that in their opinion that would happen. I am inclined to await developments as such rumour and expectation of moving has exist ever since I have been here.

October 25th

Rumour of moving even stronger – difficult to know what to believe. Today we had stoves put in the barrack rooms so had a fire going this evening.

October 26th

Blessed day of hot douches as usual. Seven men have come back from hospital to here and our room is now 20 – a fearful squash for the room is only 7 1/2 metres long and we sleep now 10 on each side with our tables and stove in the middle.

Saw the French doctor today – seems quite useless as, for two months chronic rheumatism in the ribs, he has given me 2 pills, one for tonight and one tomorrow morning! So that is that.

So far as French officials and soldiers are concerned we can say that the Germans treat us better than they. Naturally our feeling runs pretty high against the French soldiery – I call them the "*Toutlecampçais*" now rather than *Français*. It appears that there are now Italians in Lille and that they seem to be taking over generally from the Germans – that may stir the French up a bit perhaps. However I still keep to my own opinion, held for years, that any French woman is worth at least 10 French men. And it is great for me to feel how much I can now count on Gisele and her love and loyalty.

October 27th

Fine October day and glad to get out of the hot room for air. Did some washing this morning. Result of the 2 pills for rheumatism is so far absolutely zero.

The sisters Carlier came in to see me this afternoon having missed yesterday, for both worked all day as compensation for *Toussaint*⁹ holiday next Friday. They have managed to find me a good pair of *pantoufles*¹⁰ in town, in spite of my outsize, so I have passed my old ones on to another here.

Organised a manille knockout contest today, but am not playing myself in it.

October 28th. (n°3).

Still more washing this morning – water very cold to hands.

⁹ All Saints Day

¹⁰ Slippers

I have now heard from PTT and bank – it appears that the German authorities refused to allow the money to be paid to me. So now I have to start all over again and try and get authority for a month sum. The bank tells me that they are not allowed, either to pay any sums from my account to third persons, so my hopes of doing something for Gisele's parents are dashed to the ground. If I can get a monthly sum I can probably help them and send mandates to them monthly, but I do not think it will be possible if we are sent out of France.

Rhumatism still worse today and the permanent constipation is rather alarming for I am taking pills every other day now and in same quantity.

Wrote to Gisele today and shall hand letter to the Germans as soon as possible. Wish I could have news of her and the boys – I seem to be more disheartened today than other days and long for news though the pain of this separation has settled down to a dull ache more than anything else. But it all appears to be so useless and those days of May last still more so.

October 29th

Today I have got four prints of a small group of us taken a week or two ago. I will see whether one can go to Gisele with my next letter – for n°3 went yesterday – and shall also give two to Mlle Carlier, one to send to Gisele and one for herself and her sister.

Sharp frost this morning and I have done 30 laps of the Barrack Square, 9 km, in an effort to reduce constipation. Have also been busy putting the addresses at the end of this book and tearing up old correspondence. I fear my letters to Deguines and Romain about my clothes have not reach them for there is no sign of the parcel containing my brown suit.

October 30th

Went before French doctor again with others – I think he is getting out a list of our cases for presentation to a German doctor, who will probably examine us to see if we are fit to be sent elsewhere. My case is chronic rheumatism and persistent constipation with complication of piles and a reaction to appendicitis. At 59 years of age perhaps I may be liberated. I hear that the French doctor asked the orderly whether I was really ill and the latter told him that I had gone down and thinned down very much here.

Had a letter from Amiens and am replying today.

October 31st

I forgot to add that the elder sister Carlier came to see me yesterday and was good enough to bring me some bread in spite of rationing which is now on pretty strict in Lille.

Up to now we have had our bread easily enough in town and we contemplate the prospect of German bread with some display. If even reasonably fresh, it would be alright but it is green with mould, which sometimes penetrates an inch into the bread; we use odd bits for fuel in the stove.

Milder day – 25 laps of the Barrack Square this morning and then did some washing. Had chicken for lunch, from a parcel sent up from Hicks' farm and heated up for them in town by their cousin with potatoes and gravy! Some red letter day!

Mlle Dutilleul came in to see me this afternoon and brought me a small packet of cigarettes and tobacco, sent up to her by the Brosselles of Fréthun. I had not seen her for some time, as she did not know last Thursday that visits were once more permitted.

November 1st

Beautiful mild and sunny day. The German doctor came in and my name was on a list of 15 names out of all those who went before the French doctor on Wednesday. He did not keep me more than 2 minutes and asked what weight I had lost – I could not tell him but showed him that my top fly button hole can now meet easily the second braces button away from it. The French sergeant says that he believes that all of us 15 will get out freed and on parole in town – we shall see. There are too many rumours of possibility of freedom always running round the camp. I think that I started the only true rumour some time ago – that all men expecting to give birth to babies were to be released at once! Well, if I get out, so much the better; if not, as I have never really entertained any serious hopes, I shall not be disappointed.

I have not got the Harstrich's address yet, but Gisele's mother is trying to get it for me. Mme Pezron has not sent up Mme Harstrich's card although I asked for it and for the boys last letters some time ago, but perhaps she did not get my letter at Escalles. If I do get out, I think the Milles Carlier will lodge me for a ten days whilst I look round. They have offered to do so anyhow – they are really a most kind pair of sisters and been really good to me in so many ways and I always enjoy their visits and chat, which help to pass the time away happily.

Within the last day or two, two Austrians, who were part of one guard here before they moved to Béthune, came up to Lille on a day's leave. Both had been home on leave to Austria in the interval and said that they had worked all time and had nothing to eat. Certainly both of them had thinned down a lot. So it seems as if there is some truth in the British blockade being effective. I am glad to have had the opportunity of seeing a real fact at last – and their thinness was such a fact.

The younger Mlle Carlier came to see me this afternoon. She is rare chatterbox and so a couple of hours passed very quickly and made a pleasant afternoon.

November 2nd

Douche day, but I have changed my linen this morning and washed it and shall go to douches this afternoon in order to help pass the time: the afternoons are long between our two meals at 11am and 6pm.

Thanks to the Carliers' and to Hicks' cousin, we are still managing to get French bread, so all is going well.

So far, no news as regards the result of the medical visit, but my age, at 59 on the medical slip, may influence a decision in my favour. I am afraid I am beginning to hope too much for liberty and so possibly going to meet disappointment half way, so must try and cultivate a more pessimistic onlook once more.

Mr Spencer, of Dunkerque, came in to see me this afternoon, also Drewell.

November 3rd

A very bad rainy day and we are all rather despondent, as two men have found lice. There is little doubt that it has come through the men who joined the room last week, getting no clean straw issue – as a result they had to take some from the room recently occupied by the French hostages. It is likely to go all round the room and even the camp. As the Carliers' will probably come in this afternoon, I will ask them to get me a supply of powder and to make a muslin bag to hang on chest and back as I did in the last war and I shall amply sprinkle my straw with the rest.

The registered letter from the bank with 1000Frs turned up today without any explanation.

The Carliers have been in spite of the pouring rain – good souls they are really to spare their little spare time this way.

November 4th

Rain again this morning but I did some washing in spite of it and now it has cleared up. Spent the early afternoon casting an eagle eye over blanket and fleabag and am glad to say that on the lice point there is nothing to report. Then flytoxed straw and blanket with *essence d'aspic* brought in by Hicks' cousin. So feel a bit happier. Rhumatism worse today and the small of the back is rather uprising.

Stephens of Calais, the shoemaker, came in to see me today for the first time since he left here 14 weeks ago, although he is a mason! He was very patronising indeed. I gathered from the Carliers that he is very flush with money and tells everyone so. And he has bought a house at Lambersart and has got some woman to live with him; he introduced the woman to me as his landlady. Well, I hope he does not come often. I think that all is over between him and his wife, so on moral grounds perhaps little can be said. But he has an objectionable way of flaunting his money and his arrows, which gets my back up – and many other backs too.

November 5th

Rhumatism a bit better today, for at long last the medical orderly has produced some salacitate of soda tablets. More washing this morning. Renton of Calais came in to see me this afternoon and brought me some bread. Staples, of Boulogne, was in also, having a week's leave to Boulogne. He is full of the most astonishing conversations, which he has with the Germans but, as he does not speak German, one must take a lot of salt with his tales.

November 6th

Roughish sort of day generally, with heavy showers but mild. More washing again this morning – a shirt and handkerchief.

Then had a letter from Romain and the brown suit intended for Maurice is ready, so I have asked him to send it to the Carliers' address in case we have moved before it arrives. The two valises from Boulogne, left there by Gisele, are now in the hands of Romain's brother-in-law at St Martin – he is *maréchal-ferrand*¹¹ there. But shortly they will be in Calais and then Mr Deguines will take them to Audruicq and hold them there.

Have heard that there was a naval scrap on yesterday with the Italians and so hope it is true that their fleet has actually dared to leave port. There seems to be some hope of the Greek territory becoming a good place for us to kick off from, with a view to forcing a decision at least in that sector of the war. We are badly in need of a little victory – even against Italians – at the moment. It will do a lot to keep all English tails up. Personally I am even prepared to see England beaten even to her knees before the end and even so, I should not be pessimistic, as I am a firm believer in ultimate complete victory.

November 7th

Nothing much except a fearful row in the room this morning, apparently about the fire – I was out so heard nothing of it. Still it is the usual thing, with each side wanting to be dictator and talking at each other instead of "to each other". It is quite hopeless trying to get agreement and one cannot wonder that natives go to war when such silly quarrels crop up among people who interests are absolutely identical.

Have written to the Brosselles and Mme Leans at Soissons today, hoping to be able to do something for Gisele's parents through the letters.

The elder Mlle Carlier came in this afternoon and brought apples, bread and *tripe*, which I tried later on for the first time of my life.

¹¹ Blacksmith

Also Miss Curt came in to see me so, one way and another, the day has passed pretty quickly.

Again a strong rumour that we 15, who passed the German doctor are going to be sent out tomorrow or Saturday. If it is true then Mlle Carlier will fix up for me to get a *billet de logement* at the Mairie, which will get me a room in the apartment of their landlord on the first floor of the house in which they have a flat themselves.

November 8th

Certainly there are signs of movement this morning, for the Gestapo staff have returned – two of them – to their office here after abandoning us for about a week. One French man has gone out – he was picked up for an Englishman because he had an English name, although he served three years in the French army. If I do get out the Hicks will be wild with jealousy, for they have certificates from doctors for bad health, certificates that they are indispensable as farmers for producing food, and in addition have applied for naturalisation. I have felt their jealousy ever since the German doctor's visit, for in spite of all their certificates they were not on his list, nor seen by him.

November 9th

Douche day to which I am looking forward later on. Two men going out today – both French. Hicks came up in a rush from the German office, saying that we 15 on the doctor's list could pick our bags ready – usual silly rumour.

To give an idea of rumours, it has been said that 1 200 000 German troops left Lille by train this last week for Italy and Greece. I have exploded it by simple arithmetic, for with 500 men per train and trains every 2 hours the movement would take:

$$1\ 200\ 000/500 = 2\ 400\ \text{trains}$$
$$\text{and } 2\ 400/12 = 200\ \text{days}$$

Still people seem to believe such rumours at once and are equally credible of all news, good or bad.

November 9th

A lazy day except for the usual exercise in the Barrack Square to try and stir up this persistent constipation. Goodness only knows in what state I shall be after the war if it continues, for I am taking far too much medicine, which in course of time will cease to be operative.

November 10th

Much excitement last night as one fellow – classified as a vagabond officially – hopped it over the wall between roll call and lights out. To our surprise visits have not been stopped for this morning at least; but the Germans visited us 4 times last night and counted us up on their fingers and their toes time after time.

The Carlier sisters came in to see me this afternoon so the afternoon sped along pretty quickly with their news and chat.

November 11th

We all turned out on parade this morning – except the timid ones – with red poppies made out of paper and bits of black bootlaces, thanks to the initiative of Johnson. Germans quite understood that it is only a day of souvenir for the dead and say nothing at all.

Have done some washing in hot water today, great success and now we can easily heat up water on the stove of course, so I shall do some more tomorrow. Efforts to find a new loofah in town have failed so I boiled up the old one and got the soap and stickiness out of it. By the time this racket is over I shall be able to carry on an intelligent and interesting conversation with a washwoman!

Our RAF was over last night and kept the Germans on the alert alright. Plenty of A.A. fire through the night I believe but I slept well last night after a rather hectic day at the W.C. due to a dose of 6 pills. I think it was time to take them for I feel my appendix a bit today.

November 12th

Another French doctor here today and more men are trying to get on the list of *réformés*, which I am on I think. As he was really making a good examination of each case, I went to see him about my constipation and rheumatism: he tried my heart and found it sound, so it has probably got rid of the fattiness, which weakened it when Wattez tried it last March. He is going to get me some more medicine for the constipation and seemed surprised that I had been put on the *réformés* list.

The French sergeant has taken my two letters to Gisele down to the Red Cross after passing them through the German office here. The last time, the Red Cross told him that all the letters they were sending to England were being returned, so I have asked him to inquire as regards my letter of 21st September with the cheque for £350 for Gisele. It is most disappointing to feel that she is getting no news from me and I am afraid her financial situation must be strained unless AA can help her. This has given the *cafard*¹² badly.

At last today, I have heard from Escalles and have got the Harstrich's address. So am writing there tomorrow to see if they can take me in for a short spell if I am liberated.

November 13th

Wrote Mme Harstrich and asked her also to try and communicate with Gisele via Red Cross – she may be more successful in Paris than I am in Lille.

November 14th

Hick's married daughter has come up with her husband and brought me a parcel from Mme Pezron. The dear old lady sent me 200Frs in notes, has knitted a green pullover with sleeves for me and has added motoring gloves, a blanket, another vest, a pot of her jam, sugar, butter, apples and pears from the garden and Maurice's *briquet*¹³ – the latter I am going to get repaired. She is apparently sleeping now in Mme Roussel's cellar with her for company, for Blanc-Nez gets a few bombs daily or nightly. Two days ago I had a letter from her, written for her by Mme Vendrôme, by which I had most of the news. The Germans have a fire of some kind going in the end room now, but somehow or other the old lady has avoided supplying them electric light – I took out the two *fusibles*¹⁴ at the *compteur* and left them with her to have put back again if she wanted. She has rheumatism in her shoulder and was feverish when Mme Vendrôme wrote me – quite understandable as Mme Roussel's cellar is none too dry probably.

I am still rather *cafardeux*, for this matter of letters to Gisele worries me a lot. Sixteenth week is completed tomorrow – it does not sound very long actually, but the days do drag a lot really.

¹² blues

¹³ lighter

¹⁴ fuses

I have got hold of a Bible, which will occupy many idle moments. Naturally I tuned at once to Daniel's prophecy and to revelations and am still studying them.

November 15th

Blank day, except for the visit of Hick's relations. At night, our RAF spent several hours ticking up the Germans.

November 16th

Feel as clean as a new pin after the douche and have also had hair and beard cut, but shall be dirty again in a couple of days – it is impossible to keep clean in this straw and with crowded rooms. My handkerchiefs, when used, assume the same appearance as when used in a London fog.

Rumours this week have sent us to a local college, to St Denis and to Silesia. It does seem in fact that the others (Dutnall, etc...) are in Silesia.

November 17th

The Hicks family leaving for home today – the three brothers will feel it keenly as they have enjoyed the last few days.

The Carliers came up to see me this afternoon and brought my brown suit (really Maurice's now). So I changed at once, feel clean and most spick and span. The Carliers will get the other suit cleaned and do some odd bits of repairing to it and then hang on to it until I want to change again and get the brown one cleaned. They also brought me a letter from Mme Lecas of Soissons, to whom I wrote the other day. Shall write her again tomorrow.

November 18th

The French sergeant now tells me that the Red Cross can find no trace of my letter with the cheque for £350 to Gisele sent about 21st September. So perhaps it has gone safely. He says also that now the only way of corresponding is by special cards sold at 5Fr each, which allow 25 words only. So am trying to get one. Had a letter from Amiens this morning – they have no Red Cross there now, so cannot write. I am also trying to get on the track of someone who goes to non-occupied France, from where, it appears, letters can be sent easily to England.

Wrote Mme Lecas – I can pay them their hotel fee plus 3 600Fr and they can send this to Gisele's parents.

November 19th

Albert Hicks, who was bad all day yesterday was taken to hospital last night and operated at once for appendicitis – it was his third "*crise*"¹⁵. He is doing well, we hear. Have written American Embassy, regarding Gisele and boys, banks and finance of Gisele and schools, etc. Hope they can do something.

November 20th

Saw doctor again this morning about rheumatism and he has ordered massage – had one this morning and have another this afternoon.

¹⁵ Crisis

Albert Hicks was apparently operated on just in time – he was badly infected and has a temperature of 39°6 today. Today I got away 3 of the Red Cross special cards and sent another one to Amiens so that Gisele's mother can send one off too. I hope they all get through.

November 21st

Another massage this morning and I think it is doing me good.

Have heard from Deguines and they are all well at Audruicq and now happy as they have news from their eldest son.

Albert Hicks still has a high temperature so I fear he is badly infected and not going on very well.

The French staff here are still affirmative that the 15 of us on the German doctor's list are going to be *réformé*. So I still hope for liberty, and hope is growing. But I still fear disappointment and try to keep hope within due bounds.

November 22nd

Albert Hicks is better, but as I imagined, it has been touch and go with him and probably he is not yet out of the wood. All these farmers have been big eaters and big drinkers all their lives, so that when anything serious crops up, they have very little resistance.

Had more massage. It is doing good, and also the Toxol pills are relieving constipation a bit.

Gisele's mother has had a letter from Mme Harstrich, which she has sent on to me. But I expect I shall have one myself soon in reply to my own.

November 23rd

Albert Hicks, we hear, is better but not yet quite out of the wood.

I expect Mlle Carlier this afternoon, so hope she may have a letter from Mme Harstrich.

Mlle Carlier came along about 4.30pm but it was not a very satisfactory afternoon as Johnson invited himself to come and talk and spoilt things. Result was that I could get no information about the possibility of getting letters. For Johnson is not very trustworthy and it is as well not to have everyone know of these confidential matters. These people, who thrust themselves on other visitors, are a pest. Well, if he tries it tomorrow when both sisters come, I shall just tell him off in public.

November 24th

Spent morning washing – 2 shirts, 2 socks, 2 habits, 1 pants, vest and towel. I do it now with hot water, soda and soap in a bucket in the room – the result is better and less soap is used, which is a big consideration these days.

The Carlier came in and we all had an uninterrupted hour – I have now heard that we can perhaps write...

November 25th

Bombshell today. We are advised to be ready to move tomorrow about noon by lorry or train.

Apparently the *réformés* go too, so my hope of liberation is vain – I try not to be too disappointed. Somehow or other, I felt that this little book would mark the end of the third

phase but had much hoped to begin a new one with the fourth phase marked: "Free in Lille or elsewhere"?

But it is not to be. Now I hear it is!

I have written to Gisele and hope that the letter can go sometime and that she will get it. Have also written the Carlier to say 'Au revoir' and asked them to send postcards round to others to say we are off and to stop writing until I can send more news.

Now I am pretty well packed up, but left with 2 jackets, a Burberry, bath towel, shirts and pants and 2 blankets to push into a sack and make a fourth packet to add to my 3 valises.

November 26th

Gaby Carlier apparently knew last night that we were moving and came round at 8.30am, this morning, to give me some biscuits and chocolate. No visits were allowed but we talked through the gate, as did others and eventually the German guards let them all come in. So she buzzed off to let Hicks' cousin know and the Hicks family came round too. I have given her a list of names and addresses in France because if I am only allowed 1 letter and 2 cards a month, Gisele must have at least the letter and one card. Mlle Carlier will act as a secretary. When she gets a card from me, she will write round to Amiens, Harstrich, Lecas, Romain, Brosselles, Deguines, Escalles, etc. and pass on the news. Also she will try and send a Red Cross card to Gisele at once. I think it will get through quicker than anything will from the German camp.

Well, Gaby Carlier embraced me before leaving and she was really quite affected by our going, for although her visits have been made for me, still her smiling face was always welcomed in the camp and she was very popular with all. Both sisters have made many English friends in Lille. So I embraced Gaby with equal fervour in return and hope that Gisele and the boys will one day do the same. Only a prisoner can realise just how much a little kindness and affection do make life seem happy in these days of war and hatred. God bless them both – they are good women and very loveable.

And so ends the third¹⁶ phase. Now, in spite of dirty straw, bad food, worse cooking and all kinds of unpleasant contacts, we are all sorry to leave Négrier, for we know what we are leaving and losing and know nothing of what the future reserves for us.

If I do not get through this racket, then Gisele and the boys must look up all my good Friends and help them all they can if they ever find them in need – for that may well happen in the future when times will be bad and prices high. Such Friends must always remain so and they must not be left in need under any circumstances.

Yesterday I sent a cheque to Mme Lecas, hoping that she could get it cleared and then pay out something like 3 600Frs to Gisele's parents. It will give them a nest egg and they will need it badly later. It is so hard to get anything arranged for the Germans never refused anything but keep you hanging on a string until finally you realise that although they never say 'no', they really mean it.

¹⁶ Though this is the second book, I suppose that the 1st phase was the time when he was in the Somme, with the British army