

**Transcript of diary kept by Lieutenant Colonel Horace Wood – General List**  
*A literal translation 1st May 1944 to January 1945*

**1944**

**May 1st – May 18<sup>th</sup>**

Day of days joined the army as 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut severed connections with home and one and only. The latter being hardest of all.

Found conditions chaotic and nothing like expected. Left Eastbourne on May 8<sup>th</sup> for West Hampstead Camp. Conditions of living rather more primitive but compensated for by great bunch of fellows am bunked with. Americans not at all like type had been led to believe. Really swell helpful fellows.

First taste of inoculations. Drastic effect, laid me low and made me wish I had never seen army. Vera been down twice since left I miss her more and more every day. Hope this separation doesn't last too long. Fixed up for Vera to come to Wokingham, things won't be so bad now. Make me realise how much she spoilt me.

**May 19<sup>th</sup>**

Usual type of day. Route march. Felt okay except still in state of siege with stomach. One more day then see the one and only. Roll on.

**May 20<sup>th</sup> - June 11<sup>th</sup>**

Vera arrived so now feel at peace with world. Amazing what difference Vera makes to my general outlook on life. How I wish she could stay with me but the time will come no doubt.

Opinion of XX gradually changing – out for all can get, must watch my step am too easy. XX gone home, rather worried in case Vera gets lonely but she's a brick. Been to pictures once or twice and to London and Reading but not a great deal to do as time limited.

Money dwindling very fast but what is money to company of one and only. Vera worried about being stranded, don't want to lose her but don't want her stranded, don't know what to do.

Day will always remember June 6<sup>th</sup> invasion has at last commenced and strange to XX everyone taking it calmly. Didn't expect to be here when it started but given we are being saved for further thrust elsewhere. No cut in trains as guess Vera now OK thank goodness.

Out camping June 9<sup>th</sup> my first experience not as good as was expected as I was initiated into pitching tent in pouring rain. Ordely Officer June 11<sup>th</sup> strange experience parading men. Felt rather self conscious but muddle through. Army life OK except for separation from Vera.

**June 12<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>**

During this period things progressed normally. Vera is a brick sticking conditions which would upset me. 'D' Day occurred over two weeks ago but am still here although some of our chaps have gone over in gliders with 4 casualties. Feel I want to be there.

Getting on much better with S.L understand him and methods much better. Things at 'Guxy' (?) getting awkward and Vera talking of going home – dread the day when this occurs. Vera's Mam and Sad in ill health quite a problem especially Vera's mam who is liable to overestimate trouble and worry. Am worried in case this has reverse effect of Vera – hope Vera's Mam pulls herself together and takes things on the chin.

Vera left on Sunday. Saw her off from Kings X, what a sight. London really panicking, suspended bus stations full and people fighting to get away from London. Buzz bombs flying over London at quite frequent intervals, no wonder people upset. Felt annoyed Vera had to stand all way. Could have cried when Vera left, only thing I regret leaving Vera, still roll on time when she joins me. Feel really browned off now Vera gone.

### **July 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>**

Nothing of importance has occurred. Same old routine. Feeling more and more browned off and lonely. Am glad when night-time comes so that I can forget it all. Want Vera badly but guess I shall have to wait. Perhaps if I was at home it would be the same, who knows. At least I know we are destined for North France and perhaps later Germany. I wonder whether I shall be able to make a success of the job. Somehow I don't seem to have the confidence I should have. Guess Vera is half my confidence. See how I bluff my way through. Feel real downhearted about everything and no one I can turn to.

### **July 19<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>**

Still old routine with no variation. Lectures dull etc. Feeling browned off and lonely. No prospect of moving as yet or of leave. Going on 2 days bivouac. Might relieve the monotony. Couldn't face dinner today, didn't feel hungry. No letter from Vera today. Roll on time.

### **July 25<sup>th</sup> – August 11<sup>th</sup>**

Time rolls on and at last things are moving. Wallie left 4am Saturday morning last. 3 Party ready for moving out tomorrow morning 6am 18<sup>th</sup>. Had 72 hours leave but went home last Friday and came back on Wednesday. Vera was delighted and applauded and as proud as a dog with two tails. I felt like a million dollars as I could see how proud she felt. I had the most glorious 4 days of my life – she set herself out to please me and to my delight was natural and not self-conscious. I love her more than life and should I catch a packet now at least I have had the love of the swellest woman on this earth. Paradise could hardly be better than those heavenly 4 days. If only she would understand my predicament in relation to my parents as there is nothing I wouldn't do for her – oh well time might ease matters. Al I want now is for time to roll on so I can be in the arms of my one and only.

Been bivouacking 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> and night convoy at Windsor. Not bad but guess this is the last. If only I could see her but once again I should be happy.

### **August 18<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>**

Things are really moving. There's a new spirit in the camp. Everyone seems to be running about doing something for a change. Now moving out at 5am in the morning. Disappointed I couldn't see Vera at weekend as was Orderly Officer – rang her but feel really unhappy and at end couldn't help breaking down although I tried very hard. Poor Vera she is a brick and I love her so much. She tried so hard to ask me questions without giving anything away.

Nearly broke my leg when stone broke over sewer but nothing worse than cut and bruised bone.

Came down in convoy to Wanstead Flats, Sliange (?) coming back to own Division. Hung about most of day doing nothing. Visited East Ham at night 22<sup>nd</sup>. 23<sup>rd</sup> Still in dark and free until midnight.

Tok Bruce to Ilford – saw Hellie who is getting married Saturday. Later visited Bungalow but no one in so left note. Saw Marchants who made me welcome. Visited Red House but hell it bought a lump to my throat as I missed Vera so much.

Squadron Leader taken to hospital 22<sup>nd</sup> so now Hal in charge I'm deputy. Sorry as I'm beginning to like and admire him.

### **August 24<sup>th</sup>**

Moving at last at 11pm. Received letter from Vera – she has received war damage fund as bungalow has been damaged and is bewildered. Feel like deserting to help her. Got permission to go out and phone DC asked him to see Wally and fix things up. Promised to do all he can so feel little easier although I feel like cad leaving her behind.

Got on board SS Fort Covington at 2.15pm. Herded together like cattle. Well I asked for it. Raining like hell. I Un hold of ship but cannot find room to lie down all taken up. Have to live on hard tack whilst on board. Hold flooded with rain – hell what a position.

Boat moved out at 3.30pm. Feeling of adventure but of sadness at leaving behind the only one I love.

Luck comes my way, Lyall and I fixed up with a bunk by Chips and Bosun, Williams and wonders of wonders Whitehead, Salad and Plums. Living like a Lord, my lucky face did us good.

Cheerio England- Bye Darling God Bless, I love you and will be coming back to you a fitter and better man to justify your love. Doodle bugs going over and I thank God that Vera is not within their range. Have a personal score to settle with Jerry now. Feel glad I am going to have a crack at Jerry as have felt out of it for a long time. Poor Vera can't understand But I think deep down she does and is proud of me.

#### **August 25<sup>th</sup> 44**

Passed uneventful night although slept in clothes and life belt. Stayed on deck until midnight and watched Cliffs of Dover slide by as we entered 'E' Boat alley. Moon shining bright on calm sea made a lovely scene – had often seen such scenes on pictures but little dreamed I should experience it.

Heard many thuds and sounds of fire and saw ack ack exploding in sky over Dover but saw no 'doodle bugs'. Wrote Vera and home – had difficulty in writing owing to thoughts of censorship and security. Hope Vera is not worrying about me. Miss her more every day.

Felt slightly afraid last night – seemed all alone suspended in space with no protection. Slept well – had a good breakfast of ham liver and potatoes. Guns opened up yesterday on old wreck for practice. Damned good shooting. God help any 'E' Boats these chaps get in their sights. Mist sprung up suddenly at 10am, nearly had collision with other ship. Very comforting sight to look out and see Destroyers around.

Ship developing slow uncomfortable swell, hope I don't need vomit bags.

#### **August 26<sup>th</sup>**

Still living like a Lord and enjoying life. Voyage continues peaceful and weather fine. Shall be sorry to leave. Arrived off beaches at 6.00pm.

#### **August 27<sup>th</sup>**

Up bright and early 6.30am. Packed kit and ready at 8.00am to move. Landing barges came alongside to unload stuff. I'm taking a 3ton truck. Wyatt / Scout. Wyatt got away on craft at 2am we were to load on 'Rhino' flat bottomed craft. Didn't like look rope ladder down swaying around. Vehicles being swung on by crane. More I looked at ladder the more afraid I became. Finally plucked up courage went down. Stayed for a while but had to go back up. Experienced same feeling coming down again of sheer panic, had to take hold of myself and think of Vera. Finally left ship at 3am. Beach about 1½ miles away. Rhino unable to land until 1pm until tide went down. Spent four dreary hours being pitched about on raft but managed drink of tea. Finally went in to land but had to wait for sea to come back past ramps.

Landed in depression in sand so had to wait 2 hrs until 9pm before coming off. Saw several sunk ships in harbour looking forlorn and that together with obstacles and pill boxes and junk on the beach was a bitter reminder of the struggle which had taken place there.

Finally left at 9.15pm and went to vehicle checking camp. Landed Arromanches – from there was directed to Bussey 12 miles distant. Strange driving on right of road. Saw several French families who waved. Quite a lot of devastation but not as much as expected. Still no food. Whilst driving to Bussey saw sky ahead lit by flashes of guns a gentle reminder that I had at last encountered the real thing.

Thought of Vera at 10pm but felt like crying so concentrated on other things. Arrived camp at 1am. Hal already there – tried to make tea but water was stale so didn't drink it. Slept rough with one blanket in cabin of truck. Tough day but expect tougher – still no good.

### **August 28<sup>th</sup>**

Woke at 7am feeling stiff. Shaved and had breakfast by 8am. Poor breakfast and still unable to drink tea. Rumour moving out and up front tomorrow. – suits me want to have a crack at Jerry for several reasons. One – restricted our married life for 5 years and scared Vera. How I just want to scare the pants off a few Jerries and perhaps finish one or two off if I have luck.

Had new Detachment Commander before lunch – changed after lunch. Now Major Bumner. Changed to CA 24 hours ago lost cook – got new one – lost Batman, got new one and then just to put tin hat on it Americans are leaving us. Hal and Bruce such good fellows. Some detachments pulled out today for front – wish I were there as fed up with this. Went into Bayeaux, squalid place like East End. Seems very little shortage of anything and little damage. Can't buy anything.

Still no letter from Vera. Food good but water tainted strongly with chloride of lime. Roads hellish and very dusty. Covers one like fine sand when riding. French woman not a patch on English as regards looks. Motley crowd. Want my clothes washing but can't lingo well enough.

### **August 29<sup>th</sup>**

Wet and miserable. Nothing much to do. Managed to get washing in farmhouse and make them understand. Still no letter from Vera. Feeling down and unhappy.

Rumours about moving forward – some have gone in with forward troops to await falling of towns.

### **August 30<sup>th</sup>**

Still wet and miserable. Mud, nothing but mud. Still no letter from Vera. Wish they would come along as feeling really downhearted. Moving into Chateaux tomorrow better than fula (?) anyway. Rumours now that Americans may stay. Well what an outfit this is. Went into Bayeaux again but fed up with place. Shan't be sorry if I never see it again. Bremner – old school tie wallah and strict disciplinarian. Going to be a bit different Detachment from now on. Roll on time.

### **August 31<sup>st</sup>**

Still wet and miserable and still no letters. No sign of movement yet Heard Jerry dropped one or two bombs around but things very quiet here. Told we might move into Chateaux tomorrow. Picked up washing but damp as hell. God knows when we will get it dry. Cost 30 francs.

### **August 31<sup>st</sup>**

Sunshine at last but very spasmodic. Americans still with us. Moving into Chateaux tomorrow. Letter from Vera No 3, but haven't received No 2. Great kid she sure bucks me up – there's no one to touch her this or on yon side of pond.

Had quite a lot of work to do squaring up records for Major. I have somehow managed to get myself appointed Messing Officer but don't mind as something to do.

### **Sept 1<sup>st</sup>**

Up bright and early and over to Chateaux to see how RE are getting along. Poison ivy isn't the word – they don't like being shoved out. Neither would I as it's a fine place. We won't be here a long time- more or less Caretakers. Busy time running around. Major gets me to fire things up and deal with ORs. Managed a bed Rommell is supposed to have slept in but prefer my own bed with my one and only. Has two more officers arrived to put up.

Beginning to like Major more every day. Good chap but ORs don't as too hard but will do them good. Wrote letter to Vera.

### **Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Had a rotten night – couldn't sleep – must have ate or drunk something. Bruce also sick. Couldn't eat breakfast. Bruce frail and went back to bed. I'm still on my feet.

12 more officers coming here to eat. Got to make arrangements – still I can do it I guess although I disagree with whole thing. Cook and ORs in state of mutiny at Major's attitude. Will do anything for me. Have got a tough job.

Moving out tomorrow but don't know destination. 5hrs journey from here with 2<sup>nd</sup> Army. Leaving Americans behind.

### **Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>**

Just one mess up all jumbled up. Felt sick for one day so didn't ride to Jouy le Suer (?) Sorry to leave Americans behind as don't feel too happy with Major. All had binge except me last night didn't feel like it.

Going to Lille which has not yet been taken. Expect some excitement.

Long tedious ride in back of truck – 110 miles. Saw Caen, Everaux and other places. Just one desolate mass of death and destruction - amazing anyone could live through it. Buildings just flattened. Camped for night.

Now combined detachment under Col Ashley. A Prefecture Spear Head Det – why I should be chosen for this signal honour I don't know. No letters and how am I going to get them now I don't know. Haven't written for 2 days, must do so.

Arrived Amiens 1.30pm 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. People glad to see us shared their roses.

Find out now not going to Lille but pushing on into Belgium La Genne. Had narrow escape today riding motorcycle – passing guns when ran into bomb crater going at speed so thrown out nearly under wheel of gun. Brr! Too close to be pleasant. Did 156 miles on motorcycle. Fed up but had fairly interesting time trying out French.

Now find we are moving out tomorrow. Wish Vera were here to see all this. Afraid she will be worried about me. Poor kid how much I love her. I miss her so much. Roll on time when she can join me. Saw Major Austin Duly looking after Refugees – grand fellow. At present surrounded by French children all trying to talk to me in French. Very amusing. Doesn't look as if I am going to have a letter written. I say Jerries are still around here.

### **Sept 5<sup>th</sup>**

Started out early on motorbike. Making for Brussels. Passed through French villages smashed to pieces – dead horses, Jerries and tons of equipment, tanks, cars etc left by the roadside. Riding rear of convoy with Corporal - ? soon at Tournai I lost him – rain pouring down and some roads practically deserted made me wonder whether I hadn't barged into Jerrie's café, but no, drive through. People in villages excites as hell and tend to stop me going through – gave me flowers, plums, pears, apples, wine etc. I felt like the King riding is state and after a while understood how he felt after I had waved at about 5000 people.

Arrived Brussels at about 6.30pm and after a little trouble managed to find a ??? who gave me something to eat and put me right for my own. Rooms booked at the Antial Hotel and meals at Hotel Metropole. People in Brussels mad as think war is finished – stopped me and nearly carried me and my cycle through the streets. Was asked for my autograph hundreds of times – glad to escape. Tomorrow on to Antwerp and who knows. Up early in morning must write Vera before leave. Shops here packed with luxuries.

### **September 6<sup>th</sup>**

Had quite a good night. Had several beers free of charge – man eventually asked me if I had had supper, when told no he took me with him to a nice little café. Number of people in there who all got up at the sight of me. Set out table specially for me. Had chicken, roast beef, potatoes, brains liver sandwich, fruit salad, champagne, cognac, white and red wine. Fd like a Lord. General's wife who could speak English having lived in Enfield made things easier. Had nice bedroom at Hotel Central - nice to sleep between sheets again – up at 5.30am, wrote Vera.

Face very sore and peeling badly. Got OK to ride bike 25 miles to Antwerp and lined with cheering people throwing flowers, pears, apples and cigarettes. Feel like a conquering King the reception we received. Never been so popular in my life. Arrived Antwerp 12 noon. Very little if any damage people look well fed and clothed. Damsels fashionable footwear good hair permed. Fixed up in large building and fairly comfortable. Hocking and I are sleeping in on job.

### **September 7<sup>th</sup>**

Started off day by getting military routes cleared. Contacted local Police and Prison Services. Treated with greatest of respect. Saw and heard a few stories and results of Gestapo work. Was shown around local prison and conditions. Everyone stood to attention rather amusing but very satisfying to ones ego.

Snipers still at work and fighting few hundred yards away. Guns going all time kicking up hell of a row. Vera wouldn't like this. In battle order all time. Caught spy with transmitting set. Getting some damned sticky jobs but can manage it OK I guess. People still thumb up when see us. Given bouquet of flowers today. Felt quite embarrassed carrying this. Got lots of spots under skin and am worried. Installed in quite a big office. If Vera could see me know she would smile as quite a big shot. Interviewing lots of big people. Have interpreter although lots speak English. Troops pulled out of Bridgehead as can't hold out – Jerry only few hundred yards away now. Funny if had to fight way back - only have 18 rounds of ammo. Still I guess we'll hold them or bomb them out. Vera would be scared if she knew. I love her more than she knows or can convey.

Antwerp lovely place and buildings. Town rife with VD and gonorrhoea – must warn troops.

### **September 8<sup>th</sup>**

Got up late missed breakfast. Conference at 9.15am. Now have opinion that Colonel inefficient and liable to gum up works. Took German prisoner from local jail to Concentration Camp. Feel sorry for him as sorry looking sight. Guv'nor of prison gets everyone to stand to attention when I go in.

Dealt with spy through I.O. Went with a member of White Brigade (*Belgian Resistance*) to his home – met his wife who had been to Chingford. Spent afternoon doing reports and attending to queries. Quite a big shot in own way now. Went round to S.M Gendarme Dias my liaison officer home – charming people and had supper. Told me about black market coal £25 a ton, soap 10/- tablet, butter 10/- lb, suit £25, tea £1 lb, potatoes 1/- lb, and bread nearly 10/- a loaf. Amazing how they managed. No milk ration at all.

Still feel itchy must get bath some place. Never been kissed by so many beautiful girls and had so many invitations to drink champagne in all my life but give me my friends and Vera any time. She beats the lot of them.

Guns still firing all while and front line only few hundred yards away – managed to get a few tanks across, so things look better.

### **September 9<sup>th</sup>**

Another turmoil of a day – everything absolutely upside down. Too many people dealing with same subject. Must have some kind of coordination otherwise whole affair useless. Job inclined to drive me crazy and old mother at head of same who hinders rather than assists.

Managed to get bath at one of the interpreters houses - rather palatial place but very nice people. Went to bed 1am. Shelling of town still continues.

### **September 10<sup>th</sup>**

Supposed to be a quiet day but day of turmoil again. Searched several premises occupied by the Black Brigade (*Belgian collaborators*). Must have left in a hurry as everything topsy turvy – lovely furniture etc. Other ranks inclined to loot but stopped it.

Asked in for several brandies and whiskies etc, head rather hazy. Had show down with Major Bremner re Police and position should now be a little easier. Vera's Birthday bought scent.

## **September 11<sup>th</sup>**

Another busy day – saw A.F.M – RAMC and Chief of Venereal Police. VD constitutes grave danger to troops.

Instituting control as under German rule. Must see it works tomorrow. Squad of 18 special men. Insist on calling me Captain.

Taking everything in my stride. Feel confident but still a little nervous in speech. Colonel included me in his Mess. Why have I been picked for this honour?

Visited all Concentration Camps in area. Officers and men some very young all stood to attention when we walked in - felt quite big insisted I tasted their soup. Saw collaborators housed in Lions Den. Looked a sorry crowd herded behind bars. Women and men alike.

Everyone still wishes to speak English to me and shake me by hand. Saw perfume today must buy some for Vera for our anniversary. How I wish I were with her.

Munitions still lying around streets and being collected by children. Dealt with 2 land mines today with heart in mouth. Working till 1am dog tired.

Must write home still no letters. Feel a little weary and dispirited. Got some cigs today.

Still shelling town and fighting. Snipers still active, soldiers killed by shells. This sure is front line. I'm glad Vera doesn't know otherwise she would worry. Guns firing like hell now. Who said this was a back number job?

## **12<sup>th</sup> Sept**

Just another day of constant turmoil – still wrestling with prostitution problem. No letter yet from Vera. Evacuees now coming through lines. Visited one or two forts held by Germans. Working like devil all day and late night once again job is gradually beating me.

## **13<sup>th</sup> Sept 44**

Reporter in today – what a day. Query after query. No rest. Visited Gestapo HQ and saw evidence of atrocities. Cells with hardly any ventilation, no room to lay down only room to stand – no light. Evidence of people having been confined there for 8 days. Bloodstains on all wall. Rings and ropes where prisoners were suspended. Boxes for housing victims, steel lined. Switchboard for tapping of all city private lines.

Wrote letter at last to Vera. Should have done before but dead beat each night. Must try and sort things out tomorrow. Still sorting out prostitution problem. Contacted Belgian Liaison Officer inspecting problem. Must get 'Police de Moeurs' (*Vice Squad*) working again. Problem grave and urgent.

## **Sept 14<sup>th</sup>**

Still busy. Proclamation situation in a mess. Too many fingers dabbling in it. Must see Burgomaster in morning and clear up situation. Also White Brigade and try and get arms for Police as thousands are carrying arms who have no need to. Saw Provost and APM. Come to conclusion too many internal politics concerned in their game – in future am going to do what I think and ask questions afterwards as Colonel not strong enough to give decision.

Prostitution problem still unresolved, must see Burgomaster. Out at 9.30pm. Curfew and blackout not being observed as well as expected. Must see Chief Supt and be firm. If necessary will take Gendarme with me tomorrow night and square them up. Maybe raid Café and have them closed down at 9pm especially Café I visited who is profiteering from our troops will shake him up first. Have come to conclusion I am as good as any of them. They are inclined to go around corners.

Firing still pretty heavy and fighting still going on at Albert Canal. Death role duly heavy from shelling.

## **14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>**

Last few days been a mad rush. Work teeming in and having difficulty to cope with it. Never seem to get time to sort myself out but things will stabilise themselves sometime.

Town still being shelled and many people killed. Also snipers at work. Germans are not running back so fast. Attended official luncheon by Belgian Secret Service evening of 15<sup>th</sup> quite posh affair. Further batch of officers arrived to help out situation but 330 is being sent out to outlying areas but Colonel is keeping me here in Antwerp HQ. Must have made quite an impression in spite of my bluntness. Sergeant from Guisborough amongst them who knows Dad. Another from Derby County who is attached to me to learn ropes. Took him around. Quite amusing to his praise of my efforts.

Getting on well with APM and Colonels at Base. Making quite a name for myself. Vera would be proud. There's nothing I wouldn't do for her. Work myself to death if necessary. Some call me foolish but I came here to work.

Visited 4711 and got some more perfume for Vera's Birthday.

Saw Breedonck notorious German Concentration Camp today, hardly believable. Torture room of pulleys, irons for torture and electric current fixed to wall and table. Place where Jews burned alive also there. Dozens of coffins ready for victims. Saw cells with chains, no ventilation and light. Marks on wall indicating people condemned to death. Wheelbarrows with square wheels. Spoke to people who had fingernails torn out and teeth knocked out. Cells unfit for cattle. Can't believe people could be so fiendish. Shall never feel sorry for Germans.

Had two members of White Brigade disarmed today – discharging firearm without provocation. If D6 could see me know they would laugh as command more respect than Supt

Must try and get good nights sleep or will crack up. Skin irritating me again – if no better must see Dr. Wrote Vera.

## **18<sup>th</sup> Sep**

Had job of investigating charred bodies of British Soldiers in tank. Nasty job but poor blighters belonged to someone. Visited Concentration Camps and Prisons once again. Found fresh evidence of German atrocities in main prison. Still in a turmoil wonder when I will get straight. Prostitutes still not controlled. If only someone would make a decision. Shall have to do something myself as situation getting worse..

Received letter No 4 from Vera today. Gee I do love that beautiful girl.

## **19th Sep**

Busy day again. Trying to get report finished. Still no satisfaction over Brothels – must get some satisfaction as situation acute with soldiers about.

Went to Fencing Club today with Gendarme, very interesting. Have another job now of investigating atrocities of 20 Belgians shot by Germans in cold blood, what a job. New Lieutenant like an old washer woman. Afraid he will mess things up if I don't watch him.

Still shelling town and sniping. Number of people killed. Wrote Vera. Mind still in turmoil but gradually gaining confidence. Getting number of invitations both male and female but too much work to accept – don't feel like it.

## **20<sup>th</sup> Sept**

Busy morning – query after query – now have atrocities file to deal with. 20 workmen shot at Merksem by Jerries. Guess will have to see bodies when Merksem taken. Rogers new fellow old washer woman – takes all day on one job. Shall have to watch him. Must issue photograph permits now. Sumsthe old Policeman deals with everything.



Still got awful rash on body. Worried if does not get any better must see Dr. Mosquito hell of a nuisance. All one mass of bites but have done OK so far. Managed to get car from Capt Wagner Gendarmerie. Now shall have car of my own instead of using 15 AVF.

No letter from Vera. Wrote one myself. Heavy firing sand shelling of city – Jerry attacking bridge mile away, lots captured today wearing British uniform. Things a bit bumpy – glad Vera doesn't know.

### **Sep 21 – 25<sup>th</sup>**

Days flitting by and no sign of slackening of work. New chap Rodger not improving, proper old washer woman. Colonel asked me my opinion, rather awkward as don't wish the chap any harm he's no good in this place.

Settled up atrocities statement next job to find 20 bodies when Merksem freed.

Still no letter from Vera. Wrote No 5 today. Had delightful lunch at millionaire palace. Duck, mushrooms, ice cream etc – asked me to make place my home – moving in high circles lately, wish Vera was with me to enjoy these escapades. Snipers still acute and situation of Police arms serious. Submitting full report today with, I hope some results. Got small car from Gendarmerie.

Being rather outspoken lately, find it pays. Weather awful, raining like the devil feel tired and dispirited, if only Vera were here to buck me up.

Blond paying particular attention to me by coming to office but have explained am too busy to accept invitations. Must get good nights sleep or else I'll be cracking up.

### **Sep 25<sup>th</sup>**

Usual routine of rush. I don't seem to have accomplished a great deal as there are too many fences to jump. The situation is getting out of hand and yet no one will take the initiative. They should have assumed control. While Brigade are in most cases a well organised band of 'Brigands'. But we all unable to interfere.

Still no letters from Vera and yet others have had letters. Not her fault bless her. I know just a rotten organisation. Rodger gives me the pip he's useless – just a dithering windbag.

Still firing on town – Jerry is taking some shifting. Colonel refused to sign my report on prostitution - we'll get nowhere at this rate. Still I've done my best so far. Having an early night for the first time I hope, since I came. Will have a nice job when Merksem is freed.

### **26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>**

Two more days have hastened by. Still fighting in Merksem, we are not doing so good. Still shelling like hell from both sides. Jerry seems to have dug his toenails in.

Made Colonel see red light re prostitution – hope we get some action now. Still no letters from Vera. Wrote note today. Feel a bit groggy. Should have been at a special Dance given in our honour but couldn't make it. Told Press where they stood today insisted all photos to be submitted to me for censorship. Also arranged raiding of cafes for checking of cards as still a number of plain clothed Jerries about.

Rodgers still an old windbag, told him bluntly what I thought, all should be clearer now.

### **28<sup>th</sup> Sep**

Say of rush and madness. Doing a hell of a lot but accomplishing very little, too much referring to higher authority all the time. I want action but can't get it. Civil Affairs is not performing its proper function.

Still shelling town and Merksem still held by the Hun. Had walk last night, got lost and walked around for 3 hours trying to find my way back through minefields etc. Never no more. No letters as yet.

**Sep 29<sup>th</sup>**

Work still continues and now I am responsible for a whole province don't know where to turn. Still I'm smiling and battling through as Vera would wish me to.

Visited Prisons today. Saw women hundreds in cells little food or blankets. Did my best for them poor blighters. They all clamoured round me beseeching me to help.

Car burst radiator today, narrow escape in missing jeep. Arranged for raids on cafés and pubs to start tonight. Still Jerries kicking around in plain clothes. Shooting occurring every day. One British Officer shot – suspect White Brigade.

Prostitution still uncontrolled in spite of my efforts and firearms not issued to Gendarmes. There will be trouble here before long but I have done my best to avoid it. Wrote letter to Vera No 7. Now 1.30am and guns going like hell.

**Sep 30<sup>th</sup>.**

Work commences and continues throughout day. Visited all Prisons and Concentration Camps. Managed to get off early for a change and go to pictures to see Champagne Charlie. Early to bed.

**Oct 1<sup>st</sup>**

Sunday but work still goes on. With car broken down cannot do much visiting so spent day in office squaring up. I hope to get some order in this place sometime.

Typhoon crashed near here in afternoon. Shelling still continues. Weather miserable and cold and no heating laid on. Shall need fur lined pants shortly.

**Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>**

Too busy to write diary. Situation getting out of hand. Merksem and Ekeren freed and system of control had to be instituted. Working till 1am each morning at full pressure. Inundated with enquiries. All bridges guarded and so far 6 enemy agents captured. Merksem very badly shattered. Must now investigate atrocities. Over there this morning 6<sup>th</sup> in car. Stopped by civilian who pointed out booby trapped hand grenade. Had to do something so detonated same with wire with heart in mouth.

Suffering from severe cold in head. Firearms now coming through for Police. Achieved something. Rodgers sent to Turnhout. Should have been me but Governor kept me here. Suggests I have 24 hours leave but said no must carry on and get work done. Feel tired out. Going to bed with a drop of whisky.

Pace never seems to slacken much, must do eventually. Jerry getting pushed back now. Expect raids or perhaps doodle bugs. Managed to get most things squared up today. Curfew extended to 11pm good thing for morale.

**Oct 7-14<sup>th</sup>**

Much has happened. Germans now pushed back into Holland. Told confidentially had been recommended for Captain. Shall feel better when get pip not promise.

Receiving Vera's letters more regularly now but still no fags or soap. Have chummed up with interesting young lady by name of Madame De Meulder. Originally came from Birmingham,

Work still continues, no slacking up. Still have terrific cold can't shake it off. Jerry started his new device on Antwerp yesterday. Rocket bomb get one about every 2 hours they cause a mess. Antwerp is going to get a pasting before we are through. Still I never did want to die slowly in bed. These things can't be heard or very rarely seen. People very jittery about whole thing. Glad Vera isn't here.

Had real tough job 21 victims of German atrocities dug up at Merksem. Just thrown into a shallow pit and covered over. German culture – armchair disbelievers and hot air gossippers should be here. Felt very sick at sight but managed not to show it. Think I have a good lead on perpetrators of crime.

### **Oct 15-16<sup>th</sup>**

Work still continues at pressure. Gradually getting me down. Still got hacking cough and nose bleeding. Col asking for another Public Safety Officer to assist me. Rockets still landing on town. Large number of casualties each bomb. Not known what it is as yet. Gunfire rather heavy. Weather fairly cold.

Received 10 letters today, a real picnic – she's a peach. Had dinner with head of Surete today. He's a fanatic. Police situation shaky, must recruit more men. Appalled at conditions under which collaborators are held. Must try and improve conditions. Breedonck evacuated. Prostitution control starting this week. Feel I have achieved something after all. What price questions in houses of parliament. Some stuffed head conventionalist bound to raise issue if known it was at request of military authorities.

### **Oct 17-20**

Still have rotten cold in chest and head. Weather pretty awful in flat or offices. Work still continues to pour in. Col asked for assistance for me but forgot to mention rank. Major arrived when we expected Lieut to be my assistant. Awkward position but Col still wants me to carry on as before. Only temporary arrangement thank goodness.

Bombing continues. Police situation serious. Recommended by Col for promotion. Had to see Brigadier McMickin who I think has also recommended me. Three pips I hope shortly and then bank balances should grow. Vera will be pleased I know. Nice surprise for her. All work and very little play. Wrote letter to Vera – received a batch today – bless her heart.

### **Oct 21 – Nov 7**

Phew! Work continues at high pressure. Major to assist me. Lt Col Baines also arrived to take charge of Public Safety. Major returned on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov and Col Baines taken off onto Civil Defence.

Rocket bombs and buzz bombs now falling on town. Numbers of casualties. Expect this is only serenade before symphony really starts as this is most important place in Belgium. When port gets working we can really expect rouble. Not much time for recreation. Weather cold and no heating anywhere. Have seen M De Meulder twice recently. Most interesting woman typically Belgian although British born. Wrote to Supt re scheme for policing Germany. Hope to remain in Army don't wish to return to static job of pounding the beat, too quiet and uninteresting for me now.

### **Nov 7-18<sup>th</sup>**

Pressure of work still continues. Increasing number of rocket and buzz bombs on town all windows of flat now blown out. Nearly killed Friday 17<sup>th</sup> driving car when rocket bomb fell 600 yards in front of me. 1 more minute ahead of time and would have had it. 120 killed by one yesterday. Antwerp no longer pleasure resort.

Appointed Liaison Officer for handing in of firearms. To work with Gendarmerie. Feel pleased at being appointed, quite an honour. Commence work tonight. Trouble is expected with resistance movements. Looking forward to showdown as have been driving all the time since entrance for their disarmament.

Don't have much time to write to Vera these days. It's one long series of problems.

### **Nov 19 – 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Rockets increasing in intensity, seem to be getting nearer and nearer. Vera would be glad she isn't here. Appointed Liaison Officer officially yesterday. Military now taking over. Written to Vera. Fee a cad not having written but time flies so quickly but I must try and write more often as I know I'm not playing the game. Work must wait. Thinking of applying for Hong Kong, must write and ask Vera.

**Nov 13 – Jan 15**

Much time and work has passed since I last took up a pen to record my thoughts and happenings. For one Xmas and New Year are over and another year has started to move on. I spent quite a happy time in the mess and sang myself hoarse. I thought about home and hoped they were having a good time.

I nearly caught my packet. Had just got into bed when the usual came over but this time it decided to pay a visit and the world seemed to stop with a roar. Glass and doors flew everywhere but fortunately I was lying down so beyond a shaking escaped OK. We've had several near misses and they continue to come. I wonder if I'll come through it OK. Anyway I don't worry as life is getting so complex and muddled. Spend all my spare time around De Meulders, who seem to be the only people who can make me happy and comfortable. I like Mary a hell of a lot as she is so good to me. I had a cold after staying up all night when the buzz bomb came down and she fussed me like a mother. Nothing was too much trouble.