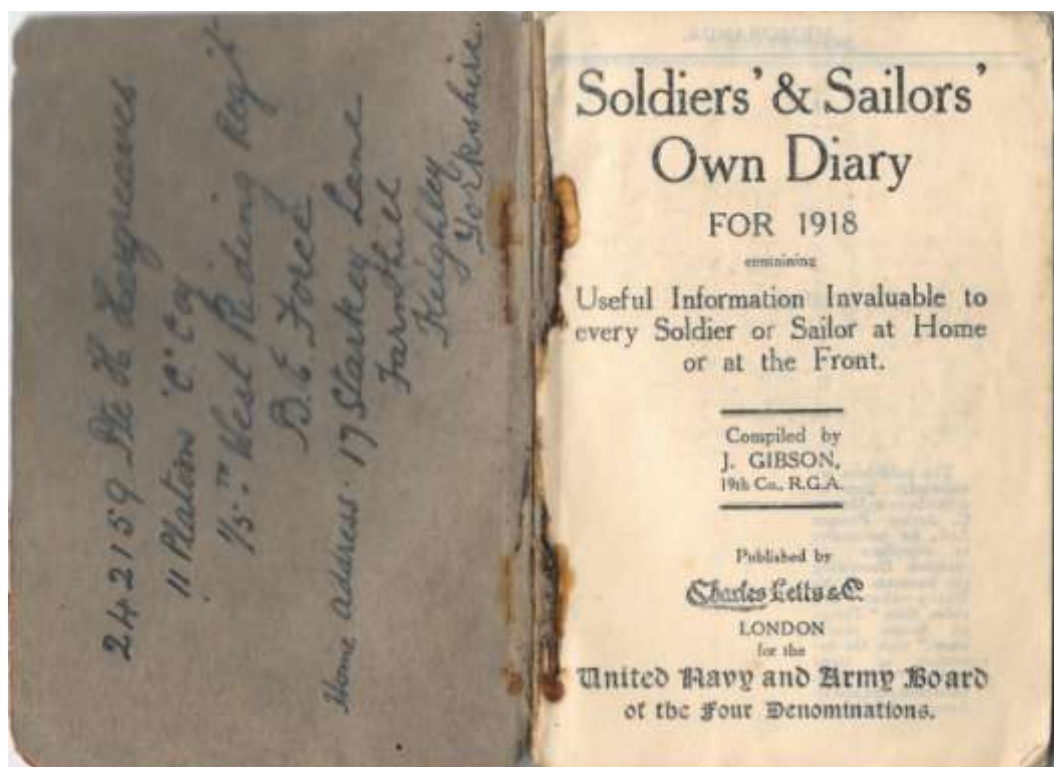
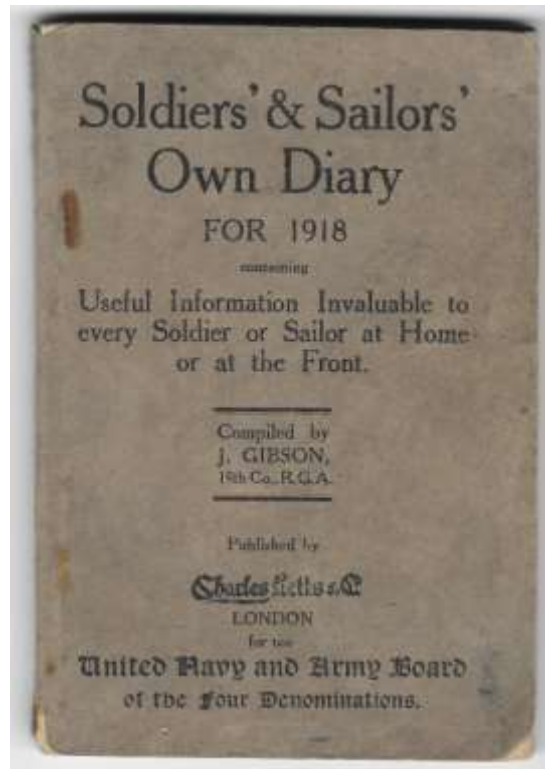


Harry Hargreaves' 1918 Soldier's diary

Introduction

Amongst the material made available to the Farnhill WW1 Volunteers project is a 1918 Soldiers' Diary belonging to Private Harry Hargreaves, of 1/5 battalion West Riding Regiment.



Front and inside cover of Harry Hargreaves' Soldiers' and Sailors' Own Diary for 1918

The diary measures about 7 x 11cm – small enough to fit into the pocket of a military uniform; the cover is made of card and the inside pages of very thin paper. The entries were written in pencil, in Harry's own small (and sometimes, after 100 years, difficult to read) handwriting. All are very concise and include an almost day-by-day account of the weather – even in the days immediately after he had been wounded. It is entirely fitting that the final entry in the diary should be a comment on the weather.

The entries run from January 1st to October 23rd 1918 and record the final months of Harry Hargreaves' service in France, which began in June 1916.

Diary transcript

Notes: The following is a verbatim transcript; no attempt has been made to correct any anglicisations of French place names. Where the text is unclear a question mark (?) has been used; and where unreadable, the number of missing words is shown. Occasional annotations and information from the Regimental War Diary of 5th battalion West Riding Regiment [*shown in square brackets*] have been included to aid clarity.

January 2nd Moved to Sup. Line. Ypres salient.

8th Moved to Front for 3 days.

11th Moved out to Menin Road for working parties.

14th to 16th Relieved from front line at Zonnebeke Ypres
Unsettled weather. Snow and frost.

17th Came back to Hondegem, nr Hagebrouek.
Nasty weather.

24th Visit to Hagebrouek.

25th 1/5th Broke
Entrained to Mont St. Eloi
March to St. Oban

26th Amalgamated (1/5th & 2/5th) to form 5th Batt.
[At the end of January 1918 1/5 and 2/5 battalions were merged. The newly formed 5th battalion was transferred from 147th Brigade in the 49th (West Riding) Division to 186th Brigade in the 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division]

- 28th Laurie to Hopitel (?) & we up from St. Oban
[Harry's brother, Laurie, was also serving with 5th battalion West Riding Regiment (previously 2/6th battalion. He was invalided out in November 1918.)]
- 31st Hardy & Bradbury killed
 TMB (*trench mortar bomb*)
- February 2nd** Relieved by 2/7th at 9.0
 March to Chante Clare
- 4th to 6th Bon time Chante Clare
- 7th Left Shante Clare & went to Maureu Bicton & light rail back
- 8th Entrained for Tinques
 Marched through Monchy Breton, Tinques & Chelers
[Regimental diary reports billeting at La Theiloye]
- 10th Payd 20frs.
- 12th March back to Villas Brelin
[Regimental diary reports billeting at Villers Brulin]
- 14th To Signal School – Bde. Chelers.
[Regimental diary – “Training in the morning and Recreational Training in afternoon.”]
- 16th Visit batt. Paid 10 frs.
- 19th Battn. Officers Dinner
- 21st to 23rd Visit Tinques
- 24th Fred went on leave – Tinques
[Harry's brother, Fred, was also serving with West Riding Regiment (battalion not known). He was invalided out at the end of July 1918.]
- 26th Divisional Show @ Chelers
 Letters from home & K' news
- 27th Hard frost.
[Written against spine – Strong rumours of enemy's March offensive amongst civilians. Wind up.]
- 28th Sudden thaw and frost at night.

- March 1st** Keen Frost.
- 2nd Returned to batt. Train from Tinqes to Mont. St. Eloi
Frost still Keeping (?)
- 3rd Moved to Springvale camp (reserve)
- 4th to 6th Decent weather.
Occasional shelling
- 7th & 8th Occasional shelling
Good weather
- 9th Moved to support line. Vancouver Rd.
[Regimental diary reports that the battalion relieved 2/4 Duke of Wellington's Regiment as brigade support, and that battalion HQ was established in Vancouver Road.]
- 12th Letter from T. Appleby. Sunday school and home
Bon Weather
[Tom Appleby, headmaster of Kildwick School]
- 13th Letter from N.A.
BW
[The initials N.A. appear at intervals throughout the diary in connection with letters from home. The identity of "N.A." is not known.]
- 14th B. Weather
- 15th Move to Front Line
Canadians 200 men raid on Lens
Heavy strafe
New Brunswick St.
B.W.
[Regimental diary reports that the battalion was relieved in the Support trenches by 2/7th battalion and moved to front line, relieving 2/4 Duke of Wellington's Regiment . HQ was established in New Brunswick Trench.]
- 16th H. strafe & raid right of Oppglie (?)
[Regimental diary – "Much aerial activity on both sides during the day."]
- 17th 2/7 raid 10.30 pm in front line. (2 words unreadable)
[Regimental diary reports a raid on the German lines by 70 men from 2/7 Duke of Wellington's Regiment. The raid took 15 minutes. Five Germans were captured and two others killed.]
- 20th Left the line for leave – afternoon 2.0 pm
[Regimental diary reports significant enemy activity.]

- 21st (2 words unreadable) on leave
[On 21st March 1918 the German army launched its 1918 spring offensive, known as the Michael offensive or Kaiserschlacht. This would be the last major attempt by the Germans to break through the Allied lines.]
- 22nd Left Springvale Camp
 Mont St. Eloi
[Regimental diary – “The Battalion received hurried orders to move to Lancaster Camp, Mont St. Eloi.”]
- 23rd Fred at M S Eloi
[Regimental diary – “The Battalion received Warning Orders to be prepared for active operations at very short notice. All detached Officers and men began to rejoin the Battalion.”]
- 24th Sudden move to Y Huts. Hot weather.
[Regimental diary – “Battalion marched from Mont St. Eloi to Etrun area and Brigade concentrated into one hutment camp.”]
- 25th 2.0 am Sudden move and forced march to join in the E advance at Ashley
 Grand retired to right of Buscoi, during night.
 Good weather
[Regimental diary – “Roads were all very congested with moving troops and guns ...”]
- 26th Held up E advance.
 Heavy strafe – Dumps up etc. Hostile aircraft – low & plain also v. active
[Regimental diary – “The retirement from Achiet le Petit was a hurried one as orders were received late and some of the Companies left in broad daylight. The battalion was closely followed by the enemy in large numbers ... B Company encountered an enemy cyclist patrol 40 strong with light machine guns ... a large amount of ammunition was removed from (our) ammunition dump. The remainder ... was blown up as we retired. The enemy ... subjected us to Machine Gun Fire as soon as we moved ... a few men got cut off and were probably taken prisoner.”]
The advance was eventually halted with the aid of 11 tanks.
- 27th Bad weather.
 Mr. Mollett wounded – night
[Regimental diary – During the morning enemy aerial activity was very marked and large numbers of the enemy were seen filling trenches. About 7pm the battalion on our right was seen to be bombed out of position and our right flank again became completely exposed.”]
- 28th More rain. Doctor Sherrick wounded in back
[Regimental diary – “At 10.30am a message was received that the enemy was attacking along the whole battalion front ... and a stiff fight ensued ... Time after time the enemy massed to make fresh attacks but was decimated by our accurate rifle and Lewis Gun fire at each attempt.”]
Lieut. J.W. Sherrick (USMC) would be awarded an MM at the end of May.

- 29th Bad time & bad weather
[Regimental diary – “Enemy got up considerable amount of artillery and trench mortars ... and our line was subjected to a heavy bombardment some casualties being sustained.]
- 30th Relieved W. Ys (West Yorks) from Support.
 Very bad – sloppy weather
[Regimental diary – At night the battalion was relieved by 8th West Yorks Regt. and 2/5th West Yorks Regt., and went into support trenches ... During operations 24th March to 30th March the battalion sustained the following casualties: Officers – Killed 2, Wounded 6, Missing 1; Other ranks – Killed 30, Wounded 126, Missing 50.”]
- 31st Better weather. Evensong in dug out.
 (Easter Day)
- April 1st** Relief at night to Henu. Tiring march. Biscuit & cocoa at Fonquevillers
- 2nd Fine weather
 No. 3 billet.
 Padre gets Wright as servant.
- 3rd Went to D. Coy with Mr. W.
 Nasty weather
 Lt. Yates goes on six months leave to England.
- 4th Wet nasty weather
 Saw Eddie Feather & P. Hargreaves from Sutton
- 5th Mr. Gadsby back from leave
 Farnell takes on for him
- 6th Weather improves
- 7th Wet. W.
 Pack up for the line at night
- 8th Reach front line in early morning.
 V. sludgy & wet
[Regimental diary – “The Battalion relieved the 1/6th Manchester Regiment and 2 companies 1/8th Manchester Regiment in shell hole positions. The relief was a long one on account of the bad state of the tracks ... Completed by 4 pm. on April 8th. The positions were very wet and muddy with no shelter accommodation for the men ... Battalion H.Q. was established in dugout in road ...”]

- 9th Drizzly rain
Visit outposts at night.
"B" Coy. take two prisoners (boys)
[Regimental diary – "A very wet day. Conditions very bad. Enemy very quiet. ... At night 2 prisoners were captured by "B" Company carrying important despatches, which showed that ... a further attack on Bucquoy and Dierville was contemplated."]
- 10th Better weather today.
Work on Trench
T.M. (trench mortar) Dump blown up at Whizz Bang corner. Many killed.
[Regimental diary – "Trench Mortar Ammunition Dump was blown up on Ayette – Bucquoy Road during afternoon causing us 12 casualties to platoon located there."]
- 11th At 3 am Message to B. H. Q. with *(one word unreadable)*
Foggy, wet and sloppy. CO lost on way to 'D'
Sam H. Gill chills on return.

Col. lost.
- 12th Fine weather towards noon.
2/7 relieve at night Coy go into line again on right in B village.
Heavy Whizz B strafe during journey. Our own shells *(one word unreadable)*
C. H. Q. "C" and "D" together
- 13th Damp up to one after fine
Occasional Whizz Bs.
Otherwise quiet.
- 14th Fine weather
- 15th Sgt. Hoskins & others killed – former – three yrs a Service to the day.
- 16th Weather improves
- 17th Fatal accident by "E" Coy. Shooting of one of own men by *(one word unreadable)*.
Mistake for bosche.
- 18th Weather bad again
Situation Quiet
J. Hunter. Nelson & myself smoke gassed.

- 19th Better weather
S. Quiet
- 20th Likewise to above.
Johnny Hunter wounded. Front line.
- 21st to 23rd Better weather
S. Quiet
- 24th Relieved by W. Yorks at night. 8 Fonquevellers
Gas shells during night
Reserve
- 25th to 27th With "D" Coy.
Other Coys. In Dug out & forward
Gas every night in village
- 26th Civvy occupant to see his property from Doullens
- 27th Extra good time in Fonquevilles
[Regimental diary – "Recreational Games were played in the afternoon and inter-company football matches."]
- May 1st** Relieved at night (*some words unreadable*) self walk to S. Leger. Over taken by others (*some words unreadable*)
Drizzly rain.
- 2nd Weather fairly good
Clothes and (*one word unreadable*) inspection.
- 3rd Went to Headquarters
Fine weather
- 4th Settled to new place
Good weather. Paid 20 frs
- 5th (Sun) C. E. Service
- 6th Man Red line 6.53 am
- 6th to 8th Hot weather
- 9th Sports
Excellent day
- 10th Aircraft manoeuvres at night both sides. Fritz bombed Henue at night.

- 11th Slight Rain
Paid 20 – J.C. Moore
- 12th Ex. Weather. C. of E. service
- 13th Ex. weather
H. Traffic
- 14th White B and I – to Authie (*village*)
- 15th Ex weather. V. Hot
Spl. Dinner (*two words unreadable*)
- 16th Left St. Leger for line 6.0pm
H.E. & G Shell on Souaslie whilst going up.
[Regimental diary – “The battalion left St. Leger-les-Authie in lorries at 6.45 pm. and de-bussed at Souastre ... “A” Company had bad luck as they arrived, being caught by a few shells which wounded 2 Officers and 10 men.”]
- 17th Reached H.Q. 3AM
Relieved Somersets L. I.
Very Hot
Short water supply
- 18th Slight shelling
Our air craft busy at night
Very Hot
- 19th Ex. weather
- 20th Relief Sup. to F. line
Heavy Gas shelling in Rear (?)
Ex. weather
[Regimental diary – “Situation quiet. Enemy aircraft very bold. The battalion relieved the 2/4th Duke of Wellington’s Regiment ... in front. Relief was carried through without hitch and was completed by 1-40 am.”]
- 21st Hostile Air Craft brought a balloon of ours down early in morning.
Ex. Weather – Very Hot
- 22nd H. Sh. in Rear
Air Craft Active
V. Hot.
- 24th & 25th Fine weather
- 26th to 28th Hot

29 th	Hot Shell Souas' 2 to 3pm
30 th	Hot Shell Souas' 6 to 7 pm Lt. W & I – from F. line to Souas' Batt to support
31 st	Cooler Shell S' 2 to 3pm
June 1st	Very Hot Maj. Brook from leave
2 nd	Maj. B. up line
3 rd	Batt to reserve <i>[Regimental diary – “The battalion was relieved by 2/7th West Yorkshire Regt. at night ... The relief was a quiet one and no untoward incident occurred.”]</i>
4 th	Adj. to Souas. Sick
5 th & 6 th	Hot.
7 th	Hot. Mr. Waite went on leave
8 th	Hot Went back up line
9 th	Hot. Heavy Shells in Reserve <i>[Regimental diary – “Enemy artillery very active during morning in the neighbourhood of Battalion H.Q. ... The rear companies (B and C) had a few gas shells near their area.”]</i>
10 th	Heavy rain apere dinner Relief of Y & L (York and Lancaster Regt.) front line.
11 th & 12 th	Hot
13 th	Hot Coys relieve <i>[Regimental diary – “Quiet on the battalion front except for active machine gun fire during the night. A patrol of B. Coy were bombed and fired on by machine guns by an enemy post but no casualties resulted.”]</i>
14 th	Fine

- 15th Fine. Slight rain at night
Gassed in Pigeon Wood
(An area of the front line).
- 16th Hot Weather
- 17th Hot with showers.
Not much shell fire.
Left trenches (P. Wood) for Wagon lines
- 18th Souastre shelled by long range.
Fine weather
- 19th Left Souastre for Thievres
Hot day. Relieved by K.R.R.
[The Regimental diary reports this on 24th.]
- 20th Thievres
Rail. Came in early morning
Dull & drizzly
- 21st Fine
Began No 2 *(one word unreadable)*
- 22nd Very nice weather
- 23rd Very hot
[Regimental diary – “A number of men had to go to hospital suffering from high temperature and general weakness.”]
- 24th Major Brook on C.O. course
Service (?) from England.
Lt. Waite from leave
- 25th & 26th Hot weather
Very busy in building etc. etc.
[The regimental diary reports these days spent in resting, redistributing packs and reorganising billets, following the move to Thievres.]
- 27th to 29th Sports esp. cricket each afternoon
Excellent & sociable civilians
Hot Weather
- July 1st to 3rd** Hot Weather
Usual daily occurrence
Farmers busy in hay etc.
- 4th Slightly Wet

- 5th Coys on Range
Hot again
- 6th Cooler
- 7th (Sun) C. E. Service in school
- 8th Slight change in weather
- 9th Very Hot
- 10th H. Thunder Storm
- 11th Fine
- 12th Hot day
Brigade Sports
- 13th Cooler
Close in evening
- 14th Left Thievres for South. Very wet. Entrained 10:30pm
- 15th and 16th Hot
Travelling
[Regimental diary (15th) – “Battalion in train all day... The troops were given an ovation by the French populace especially around Paris.”]
- 17th Hot & Wet
Detrained and Buses 40 kilos (?). March to Athis
- 18th Hot weather & good place to swim at Athis.
- 19th Forced march from Athis to Germaine.
Fine. Lot left JWT & WW. FW & A. FARNELL
Athis sick also.
Padre
[Regimental diary – “The battalion ... moved out of Athis at 6.35 am. and moved to Germaine. About 8pm. news was received that the battalion would be required to attack on the following morning ...”]
- 20th Mr, Waite Badly wounded & myself slightly. FHW B. mauled.
57 & 62 Div. take manoeuvres
[The regimental diary records a chaotic day in the field with the battalion advancing 4000 yards and then being forced back. At some point during this, Lieutenant F.H. Waite and Harry Hargreaves were wounded. During the month, the battalion sustained 14 Officers wounded and one killed; Other ranks – 52 killed or died of wounds; 272 wounded, 38 missing.”]

21st Get (?) to 50th C.C.S. (*Casualty Clearing Station*) & inoculated.
Saw Padre & Mr. Waite

22nd Transferred from C.C.S. to Rouen 10 Gen HO Good travelling
21 NA birthday

23rd Very Wet & dull
First dressing

24th Fine with showers
Sec. dressing marked for T.D.
Trouville

25th Fairly good weather
News from unit

26th Fine day
Transferred from 10 Gen Rouen to Trouville 73 Gen

27th Nasty day

28th Fine day. Evening walk down on the shore

29th Transferred to "K9" skin trouble
Fine day

30th Wet

31st Fine

August 1st Fine weather.
Mid night air raid alarm.
Raid on Le Havre

2nd Fine weather.

3rd Wet.

4th (Sun) Spec Day of confession at (*one word unreadable*)

5th Letters from home.
Fine weather

6th Letter from N A
Wet

7 th	Paper & letter N. A. ! Wet
8 th	Heavy rain
9 th	Paper – N A Letter from Fred Secd. air alarm
10 th	Nice & warm Extra good concert at y.m.c.a.
11 th	Lovely day
12 th	Lovely Day Good concert @ y.m.c.a.
13 th	Lovely Day Walk on the shore
14 th	Extra good entertainment in Dining Hall. Very hot day
15 th	Lovely day & Very warm
16 th	Marked out of hosp. K9 73 rd Fine & warm. Inspection by C.O. & drew khaki
17 th	Fine & hot. Handid (<i>sic</i>) in hospl. Blue. Played (?) for sappers. Proceeded to 14 C Camp 4.50pm
18 th	(<i>One word unreadable</i>) M Inspect.
19 th	Promenade Deauville& bathe in sea. Fine.
20 th	Very hot. Fatigues.
21 st	Hot. Fatigues
22 nd	Hot Visit Trouville

23 rd	Hot
24 th	Extra Hot
25 th (Sun)	Church service. Hot Sports
26 th	Extra Hot Parades
27 th	Hot Fatigues. 73 Hospl
28 th	<i>(Several words unreadable)</i> Marked no. 2
29 th	Hot Clothing inspection
30 th	Warm with signs of rain Visit Trouville
31 st	Heavy Rain falls No parade

Sept 1st (Sun) Wet. Attended Services

2 nd	Fine. Parade & Beach. Rough sea. Letter from Batt.
3 rd	Unsettled weather Cook house fatigue
4 th	Marked 1 = out Fine.
5 th	Inspection – weekly Fine Weather 9.30pm Warmed (?) for base.
6 th	Fine. Left C.C for Base Rouen at 3.45pm
7 th	Wet but got to see FHW. No. 8 G. H. Going on myself.

8 th	Inoculation M.O.'s inspection & was equipped
9 th	Heavy rain all day. Saw T. Hargreaves (from Eng) <i>[Private Thomas Hargreaves, 6th batt, West Riding Regiment. From Kildwick.]</i> Parade through Gas.
10 th	H. Rain all day Above TH went up to Batt at 8
11 th	Heavy Rain All day
12 th	Heavy rain & wind. Slight thunder storm. Every sign for more rain
13 th	Rain – Slight – less wind
14 th	Fine & warm with breeze
15 th	Hot day
16 th	Fine – hot
17 th	Fine. Admitted to hospital 7 th Can G. – Boils Rain during night.
18 th	Fine & Warm
19 th	Broken weather
20 th	Heavy showers at intervals
21 st	Fine with wind.
22 nd (Sun)	Fine. Att. C of E. Services
23 rd	Broken weather Ex. concert No 7 G.H. Can Air plane activity
24 th	Extra fine – windy
25 th	Fine Marked C.C.

- 26th Cloudy & windy
Left Hospl to No. 6 C.C.
Inspection = "C"
- 27th Left 6 C.C to Hardebot No. 10 CC
Heavy Rain & Wind. S. lights at sea
- 28th Heavy rain in morning & Fine afternoon
Bombarding out at sea.
- 29th (Sun) Fine morning. Parade Services. Wet evening. Harvest F.
- 30th Left 10 C.C. to St. Martin's Camp
Very cold. Visit to Boulogne.

October 1st Fine but cold all day.
From St. Martin's to "F" Base.

2nd Fine. *(Two words unreadable)*
Extra Good News from line
[This is likely to have been the news, reported in the Regimental Diary, that between 28th and 30th September the battalion had broken through the German line and taken over 500 prisoners.]

3rd Fine weather
Fine Piquet

4th Fine

5th (Sat) Wet Morn
C of E service Evening

6th (Sun) C of E service

7th Fine. Left Base for Batt.
Reached wing 10.45pm

8th & 9th Marching

8th Left wing for batt.

9th Found Transport lines.
Wet

10th Fine W.
March
Advance

11 th	Nasty weather
12 th	Dull morning C.O & Adj. inspection
13 th (Sun)	C. of E. Service.
14 th	Parade for manoeuvres <i>[The Regimental diary records "Attack Practice"].</i>
15 th & 16 th	Dull weather
17 th	Moved from Carnieres to line. Leave men to wagon lines Slightly damp.
18 th	Relieved from line for 24 hrs Dull
19 th	Went in line for over top Wet night
20 th	Embarked for leave <i>[Regimental diary – "The battalion was ordered, in conjunction with other units of the Brigade and divisions on either flank to take part in an advance at 2am. ... The leading company "A" had to cross the La Selle River first and 'mop up' the village in front of the remaining three attacking companies ... The river was just fordable at one point ... All the company got across in 15 minutes. The whole battalion had successfully crossed the river by two minutes before zero hour ... The crossing of the river before zero ... without casualties and undetected by the enemy was a feat well accomplished by the battalion ... By 4:10 am the whole of the battalion objectives had been taken. The men attacked with a will and dash beyond all praise ... "]</i>
21 st	<i>(Entry unreadable)</i>
22 nd	Left Boulogne for Blighty
23 rd	Arrive home. 7.15 am Fine.

Harry Hargreaves did not return to foreign service until after the Armistice. His military record suggests that he was in Germany for a short period in April 1919; confirmed by a family photograph.

He was finally demobilized on June 6th 1919 and returned to his parents' home, 17 Starkey Lane, where he lived until 1926. In 1927 he began to farm at Heights Farm Silsden, initially with his father.

In 1941 he married Maria Wade, a farmer's daughter from Silsden. They didn't have any children.



Pte. H. Hargreaves, no. 242159, 1/5th battn. West Riding Regiment; and in later life

Harry Hargreaves died on 1/12/1982; aged 86 years.

Acknowledgement

The Farnhill WW1 Volunteers Project would like to thank Andrew Whittam and Jo Birtwhistle for providing the photographs used in this article, and also for allowing us to transcribe Harry Hargreaves' 1918 diary.

