

3609 Private Thomas Benjamin Shaw, 14th Battalion AIF

By his great-nephew, Robin Shaw, July 2015



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

DASEY2502

Chronology

Enlisted 22 July 1915

Initially assigned to 2 Company, 4th Depot Battalion, Broadmeadows. Presumably in basic training at Broadmeadows for about 5 months

9/12/15 - assigned to 8th Reinforcements to the 24th Battalion

5/1/16 – Embarked HMAT *Afric* at Melbourne, exact date of arrival in Egypt unclear

24/2/16 – proceeded via Zeitoun (NZEFC camp outside Cairo) and proceeded to Australian camp at Serapeum (on Suez Canal south of Ismailia) & taken on strength 8th Battalion

7/4/16 – Taken on strength 14th Battalion at Serapeum

1/6/16 – Noted to have joined BEF (British Expeditionary Force) at Alexandria (all AIF troops were part of the BEF, a term that referred to all British & Commonwealth forces in France & Belgium). Embarked HMAT *Transylvania*

8/6/16 – disembarked Marseilles, taken by rail to Bailleul, France about a 60-hour journey. *Appears to have been with B or C Company, both of which disembarked on that day along with battalion HQ.*

17/6/16 – marched with elements of the 14th Battalion about 8km from Bailleul to Fort Rompu (on the Armentieres road by the River Lys about 5 km north-west of Bois-Grenier). They were now in the battle zone.

4th Brigade (incl 14th Bn) in reserve 18-19/6/16 – provided fatigue parties etc

21/6/16 – 3 platoons of the 14th Bn entered the lines alongside 19th Bn to gain experience in the front trenches

27/6/16 – 3 more platoons of the 14th entered the lines

28/6/16 – Rest of the 14th Bn entered the lines to relieve the 19th. B, C and D Companies held the front and support lines, A Company in reserve.

The 14th Battalion War Diary states that they held a front running from a track running south from 'Burnt Farm' to Grand Flamengrie Farm. La Flamengrie Farm was marked on trench maps and exists today on Chemin de la Patinerie south east of Bois-Grenier.

29/6/16 – Rearguard troops from Marseille rejoin 14th Bn.

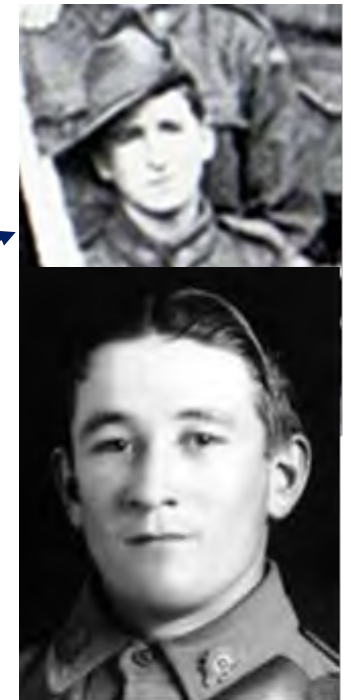
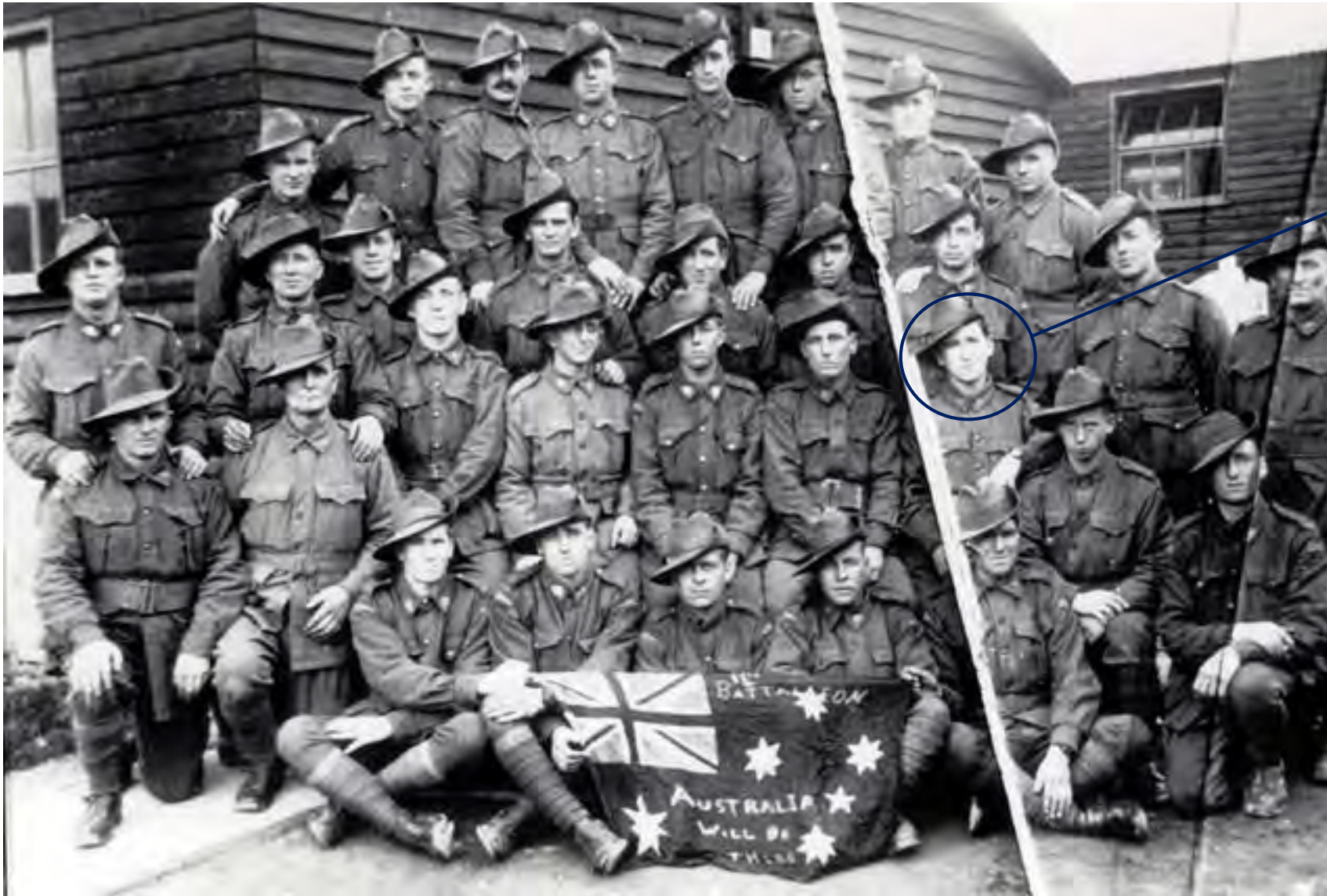
2-3/7/16 – Trench raid by selected men of A Company of the 14th Bn on the German lines. Notes by Lt-Col Dare, Commander of the 14th, indicate that Pvt Shaw did not participate in the raid.

3/7/16 – Heavy German artillery and mortars opened on the 14th lines in response to trench raid. Concentrated on D Company section of the line. Infantry probes followed but were mostly repulsed with help of 19th Bn Lewis guns. Overall the 14th took about 40 casualties and the D Company section of trench (section 57) was demolished. It is possible that Pvt Shaw was one of those 40, but it is not clear.

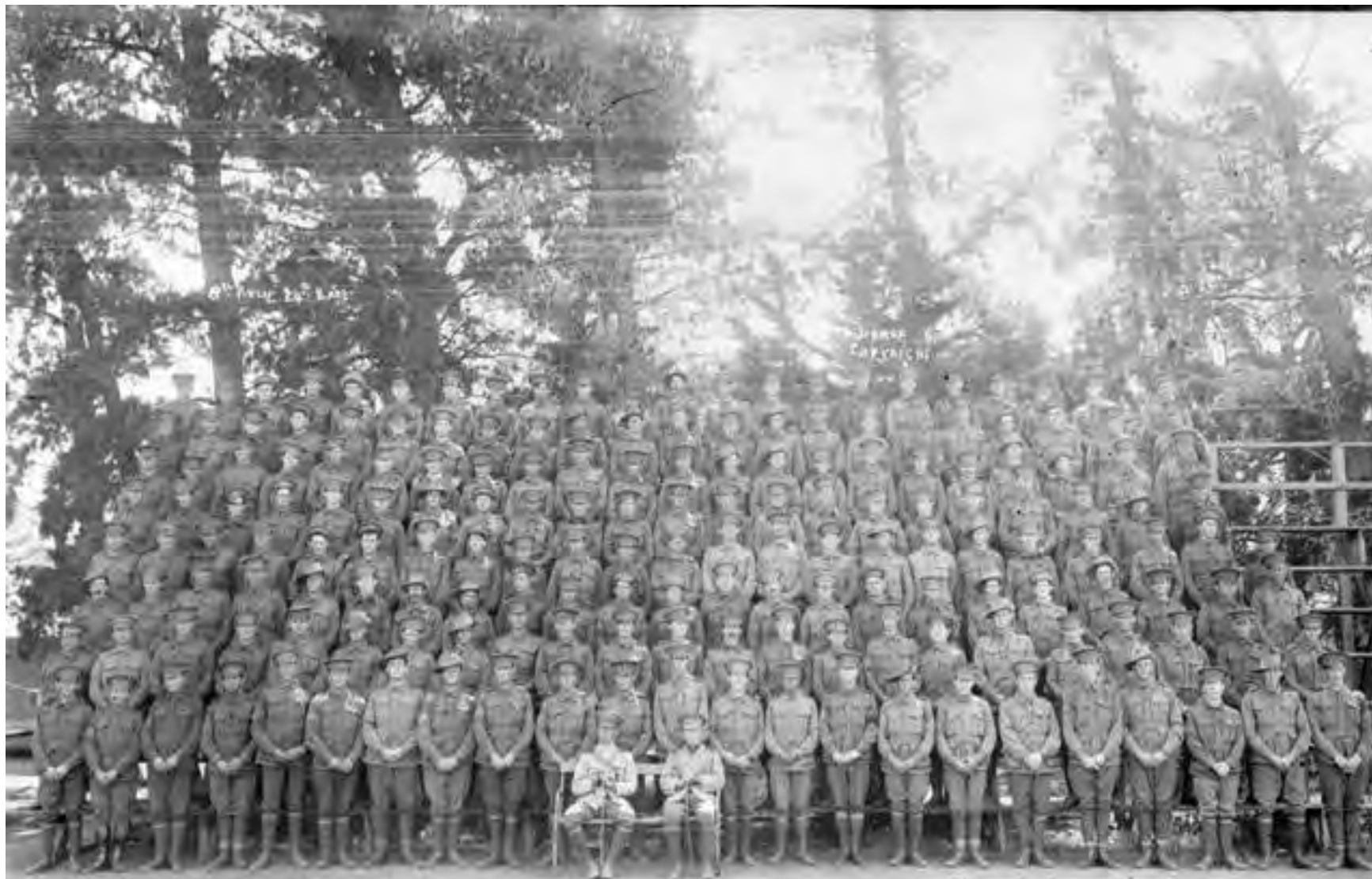
Date of death recorded as 3/7/16 but not reported until 5/7/16.

Date unknown – Buried at Brewery Orchard Cemetery Bois-Grenier – Rev John Lelean Cope, Chaplain to 14th Bn officiated. Burial was formally reported 27/7/16.

Undated photo from a fractured glass negative of 14th Battalion men, location unknown. Did any of these men know Tom? Or...could it be?



The slogan 'Australia Will Be There' suggests that this was early in the war, before the realities had started to sink in and the jingoism receded.



Group portrait of the 8th Reinforcements, 24th Battalion taken at Broadmeadows (note the Darge copyright inscription upper right – Darge had the contract for photography at Broadmeadows), probably in December 1915 just prior to embarkation for Egypt. If the Embarkation Rolls are accurate, Tom is in this photo somewhere. The photo of him on the front cover was also by Darge.

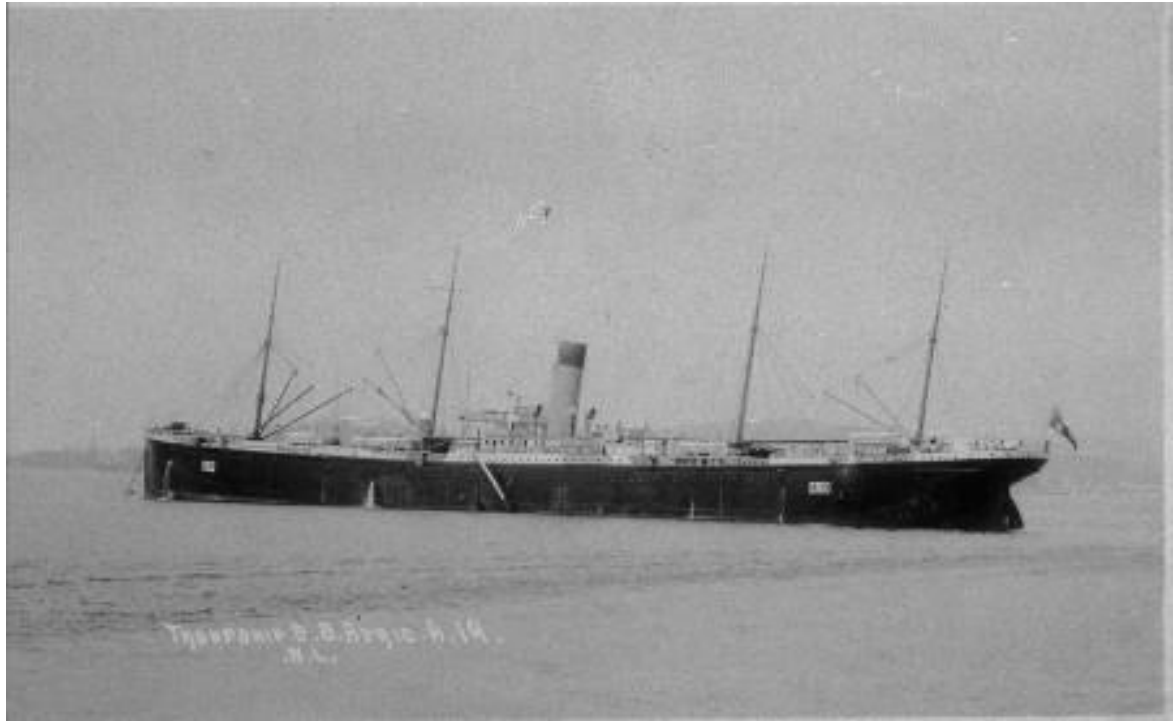
The ship that carried Tom and the 1st-8th Reinforcements, 24th Battalion from Melbourne to Egypt

A19 HMAF AFRIC

11,948 gross tons. 167.6 x 19.3 metres.
Passenger/cargo steamship built by Harland & Wolff Belfast for Ismay Imrie & Co (White Star Line). Completed 2nd February 1899.
Twin screw, quadruple expansion engines making 14 knots, cruising speed of 13 knots.
Employed on the Australia - England service

1st November 1914 assembled with the first convoy at King George's Sound, Albany Western Australia in transporting the First Detachment of the Australian and New Zealand Imperial Expeditionary Forces

21st April - 13th May 1915 converted at Cockatoo Island Drydock, Sydney to transport 549 troops and 500 horses

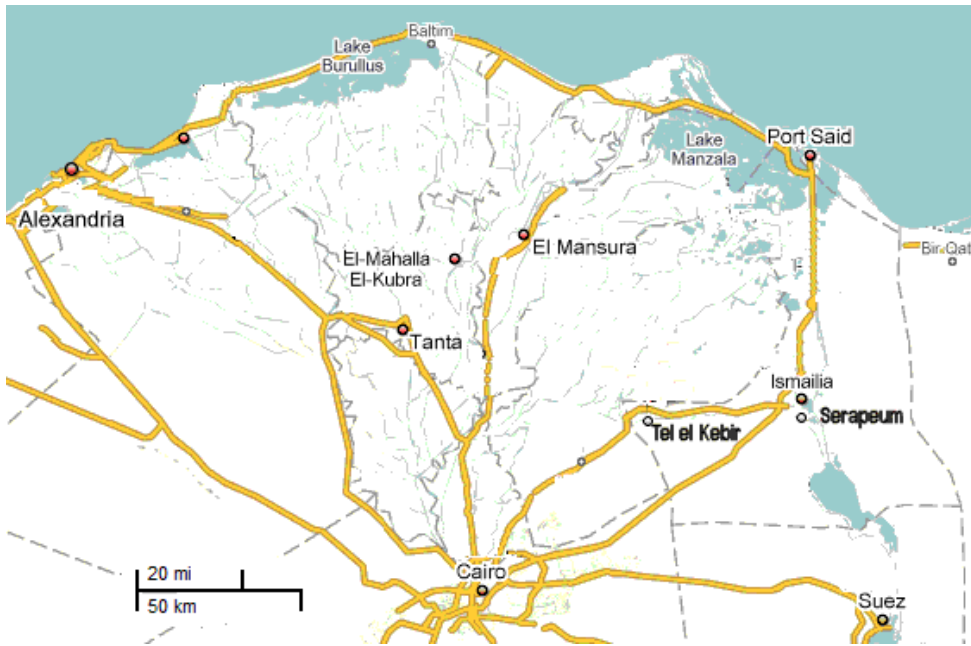


Completed six transport voyages from Australia commencing 18 October 1914 until final voyage from Adelaide 7th November 1916

During that time carried six Field Artillery Battery Brigades, the 1st Infantry Battalion (New South Wales) 1st Infantry Brigade, 43rd Infantry Battalion (South Australia) 11th Infantry Brigade and their 1st Reinforcements, a further fourteen Infantry Brigade Reinforcements, five Division Trains of the Army Service Corps, two Light Horse Brigade Reinforcements, two Mobile Veterinary Section Reinforcements, 2nd Veterinary Section (Victoria) 6th Reinforcements, 1st Division Ammunition Column 1st Division Artillery 13th Reinforcements & Medical Officers

12 February 1917 torpedoed and sunk in the English Channel with a loss of 22 lives

Location & undated photos of the Australian camp at Serapeum, Egypt, next to the Suez Canal





Alexandria quay: allied troops preparations for embarkation – from the Kivell Family website – Diary of Ralph Kivell, NZEF

Tom would have witnessed something like this as he embarked on the HMT *Transylvania* for Marseilles.

The troops pictured are likely British as they are wearing the British pattern cork or 'pith' desert helmet.

The troopship B.7 in the background is likely HMT *Aragon*. She served as a British transport throughout the Gallipoli campaign and remained in the Mediterranean until she was sunk by a torpedo on 30 December 1917 with the loss of 610 lives.

The ship that carried Tom and the 14th Battalion from Egypt to Marseilles

SS/HMAT TRANSYLVANIA

Built by Scotts Greenock, Yard No 451

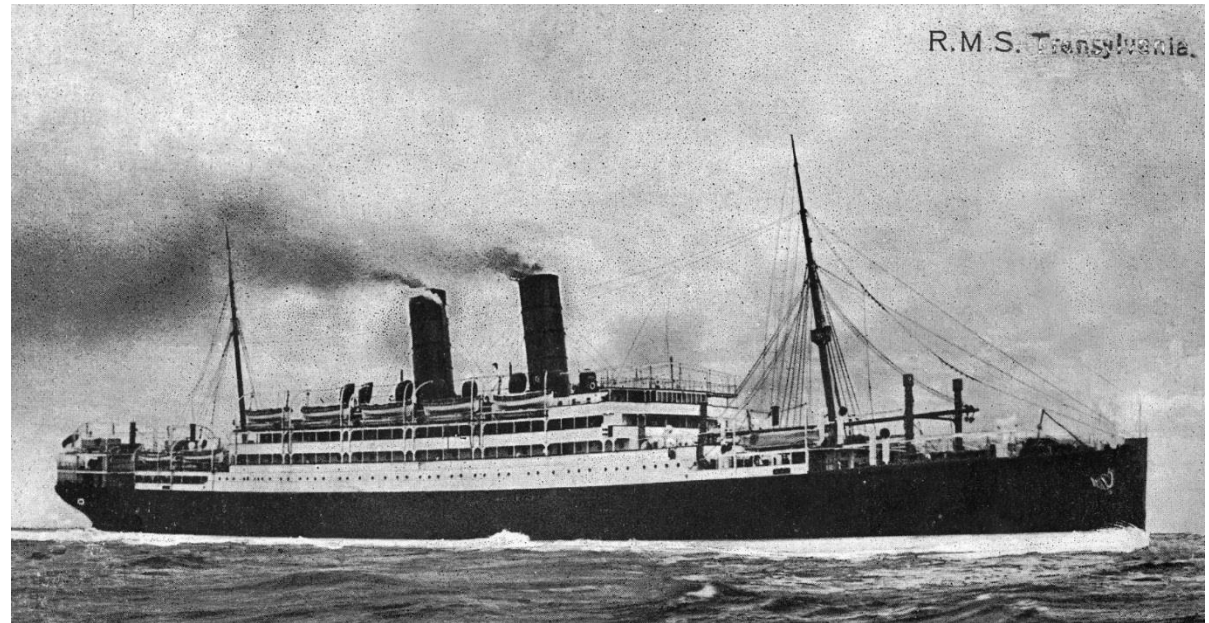
Propulsion: steam, turbines, 17.5 knots

Launched: Saturday, 23 May 1914

Tonnage: 14348 grt Length: 548.3 feet Breadth: 66.6 feet Draught: 42 feet

The SS Transylvania was a passenger liner of the Cunard subsidiary Anchor Line. Completed just before the outbreak of World War I, the Transylvania was taken over for service as a troopship upon completion. She was designed to accommodate 1,379 passengers but the Admiralty fixed her capacity at 200 officers and 2,860 men, besides crew, when she was commissioned in May 1915.

She was torpedoed and sunk on May 4, 1917 by the German U-boat *U-63* while carrying Allied troops to Egypt and sank with a loss of 412 lives.



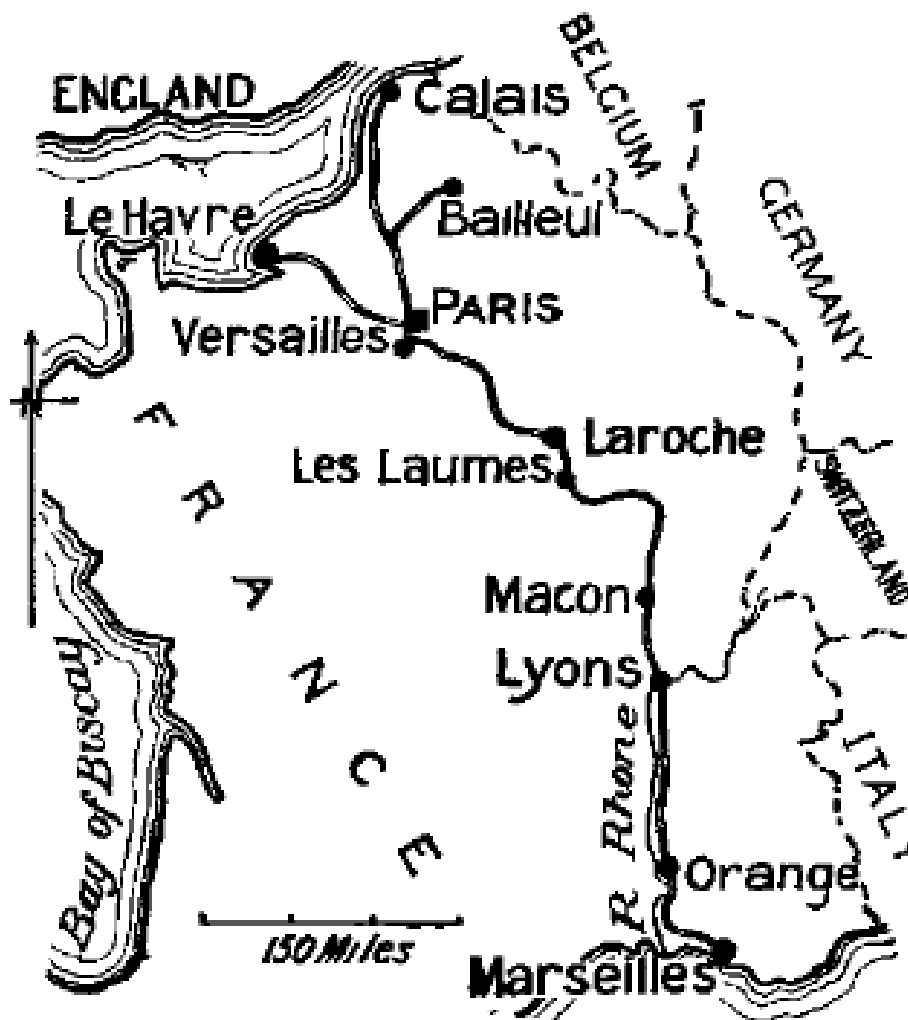
Right: Photo taken on board Transylvania in March 1916 en route to Marseilles carrying troops of 1st Australian Division, here gathered on deck to be addressed by Gen Birdwood. Gives some idea of how packed these ships were.





ROUTE THROUGH THE MEDITERRANEAN

Source - Wanliss, History of the 14th Battalion



BATTALION'S ROUTE THROUGH FRANCE

Source - Wanliss, *History of the 14th Battalion AIF*



"Hurry up and wait!" – photo taken by Private John Edward Lord, 13th Field Ambulance at Marseilles on 13 June 1916 while waiting for the train to Bailleul. Tom had passed through this same place 5 days earlier and no doubt had the same wait for the train.



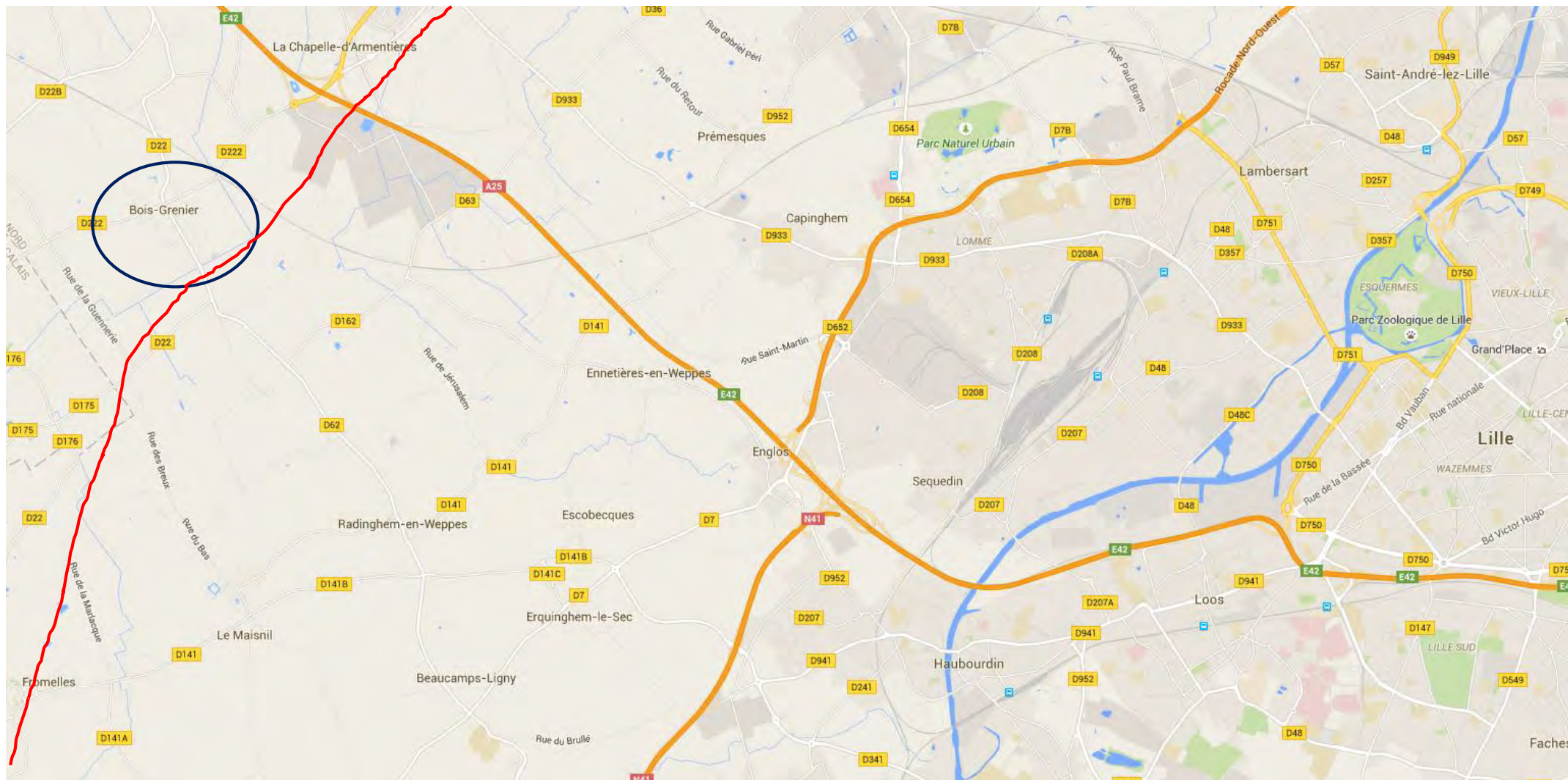
As a troop train carrying Australian soldiers from Marseilles to Le Havre makes a rest stop, the soldiers have disembarked to stretch their legs on the tracks beside the train, rest on the embankment (right) or pick wildflowers to decorate the train carriages.

– from the Kivell Family website – Diary of Ralph Kivell, NZEF

Tom would have travelled on a train much like this, along the same line, though the 14th went to Bailleul rather than Le Havre. Many authors including Wanliss in his *History of the 14th Battalion* noted how, during this journey from Marseille, the Gallipoli veterans among the Diggers particularly rejoiced in the verdant French landscape, the friendly locals and, (at least in summer 1916), the benign weather. It must also have seemed good to Tom too, after about 5 months camped in the Egyptian desert.



Situation map 1



Situation map 2 – rough location of the front line is marked in red

289.

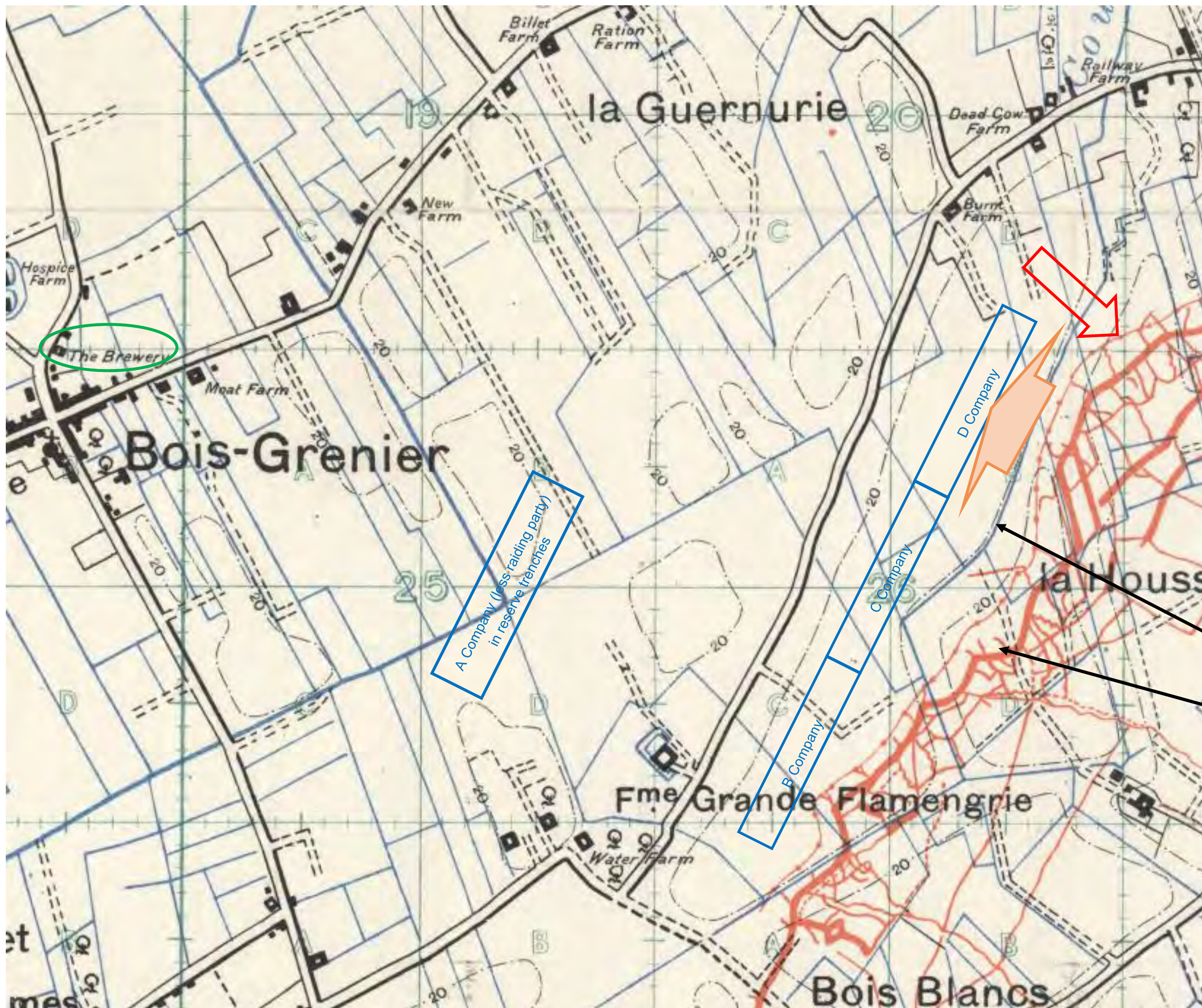
Date.	Place and Time.	14 th Battalion A.I.F.	Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
Continued	DAY GRENCH	53 & 57 machine. Chap BOIS ARCHE ARV2, 300 Sq I 26 + 2 1/2 to Sq I 20 & 21. 1. BARRAGE FRANCHISE FARM to back running with from BARRAGE FARM. The line is from section of the 19 th Bn remaining in the trenches. Strength 29 officers 903. others. Inspection of trenches by Gen Birdwood. Gen 1 st MAR 25 at 10 AM. Section 54 and 57 shelled during the day with slight damage. Heavy bombardment went at midnight by our guns with retaliation by enemy on our trenches. Lost on our front after 1 AM. Put 6 officers & 3 others away from front on enemy trenches.	At about 10-20 AM. Heavy fire interrupted on our wire and trenches there. Three rounds from 12.1 st Bn from Capt. Capt at 12.1/4 AM = 1 AM. 10 AM. 10 AM. Report Received from at 10 AM. 2 officers & 5 others lost 1 AM 1 AM 2/1 AM DEATH in 100 1 AM from 100 1 AM Killed 1 wounded 1 changed 12

29/6/16

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Above and next page - extract from 14th Battalion War diary describing the location of the line held by 14th Battalion and the dispositions of the Battalion's 4 companies.

Date	Place and Time	14 th Battalion A.I.F.	Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
30/6/16.	BOIS CREANON	<p>Strength 29 officers 893 others. The dispositions of Coys are follows. Front line <u>Right Section</u> 52 and $\frac{3}{4}$ of 54. Coys B Coy 3 platoons with 1 platoon in support line. <u>Centre Section</u> 404 and 24 and $\frac{1}{2}$ 56 sections C Coy 3 platoons with 1 platoon in support line. <u>Left Section</u> $\frac{2}{3}$ 56 and 57 sections D Coy 3 platoons with 1 platoon in support line. <u>Reserve</u> A Coy two training party of 80 of 83 others, in Bois CREANON 1005 Sq I 19 ob. and in front of me line except for some shelling with damage to parapets only. Battalion being ordered to night 13. 1005 Section 52 & 404. Battalion</p>	



Segment of British Ordnance Survey trench map 1:10,000 Sheet 36 NW 4 Bois-Grenier, version dating to late 1915. The lines in this area were static for most of the war so this will be largely accurate for July 1916.

Front held by 14th Battalion AIF (with company fronts marked) in early July 1916. Each company had 3 platoons in the front line trench and 1 platoon in the support trench a few metres behind

The red arrow marks the likely site of the raid by part of A Company 14th Bn 2-3 July 1916

The orange arrow marks where the German artillery bombardment and infantry counter-attack mainly fell on D Company late on 3rd July 1916

Course of Courant de la Chapelle (incorrectly called the 'River Courant' in the 14th Bn diary and Wanliss's *History of the 14th Battalion*) 'Courant' in French in this context means 'stream', what we would call a creek.

German trenches marked in red

Note the site of the Brewery (circled in green top left), where the advanced dressing station was situated. The original cemetery was at the rear (south) of this, roughly where the current Brewery orchard Cemetery is.

The same area today via Google Earth. Of the features seen on the trench map, few landmarks remain. The Courant de la Chapelle has disappeared. Some of the roads in the top (north) of the area follow different alignments but the indicated spot is the likely location of 'Burnt Farm'. The trench lines are nowhere visible even as traces. This is likely because the area was flat and low-lying, and years of shelling had destroyed the drainage. Trenches dug more than a few feet deep would fill with water. So for the most part the 'trenches' were only shallow and then built up above ground as berms or parapets to a height of six to eight feet. As a result, when the parapets were levelled by farmers after the war, there was nothing left to trace the course of the lines except in this case, part of the Chemin de la Patinerie for a short distance north of the farm.





Google Street View looking north-east from the Chemin de la Patinerie where it crosses the modern railway line about 1½km east south east of Bois-Grenier. The front line held by the 14th Battalion in early July 1916 probably lay in these fields. The railway is about where the B and C Company fronts joined, with C Company in the field at centre, B Company to the right. I believe that Tom was killed within about a 500 metre radius of this very spot.



Further view of B Company sector, now partly occupied by an electricity sub-station. The buildings to the far right are part of the Grande Flamengrie Farm.



*J. Fiddling's grave at
Bois Grenier 1916*



*20th Battalion victims of
the German trench raid
May 1916*



*Our Billet at Bois Grenier
after the first shell had hit it
1916*



*Myself observing & a
friend in the front line at
Bois Grenier 1916*



*Myself writing in the
front line at Bois
Grenier 1916*



*Two friends in the front line
at Bois Grenier 1916*



*Sun Woods & Jack McNeil
Bois Grenier 1916*

Contemporary photos taken
around Bois-Grenier in 1916.

Source – State Library of NSW,
William H. Burrell war snapshots, 17th
Battalion

Extract

Diaries of # 2063 Lance Corporal/Sapper William Dalton Lycett, 4th Field Ambulance & 15th Light Railway Operating Co. A.I.F.

Monday 3rd July, 1916

Up at 6.30 a.m., on parade 7 a.m., roll call and orders. Heavy guns going all night, shake our billet like an earthquake. On duty 8 a.m. About 20 wounded brought in during night, evacuated them this morning and did sick parades etc. Our boys made another raid on enemy's trenches last night. News of British and French offensive further south, very good. Beautiful day, aeroplanes fairly active. Rather quiet this afternoon, so did some writing. About 9 p.m. our guns started firing heavily again. In bed 9.30 p.m.

Tuesday 4th July, 1916

Up 6.30 a.m., on parade 7 a.m., on duty 8 a.m. About 40 or 50 wounded came in during night and about dozen more between 8 and 9 a.m. One man died. Enemy made raid on our trenches last night, one of our Batt., 14th, caught it pretty hot, but enemy while returning to own trenches, caught with enfilade fire from N. Zeal. troops and terribly punished. Very busy all morning. After dinner went with Capt. Furber to Bac. St. Maur to arrange about operation for appendix on young woman. Back for tea. Very quiet tonight so turned in 8.30 p.m.

It appears that Lycett was stationed at Fort Rompu at the time (on the Armentieres road by the River Lys about 5 km north-west of Bois-Grenier). There was a main dressing station there taking casualties from the advanced dressing stations including Bois-Grenier.

I doubt that Lycett's mention of a death referred to Tom. It seems clear that Tom was killed outright, so logic suggests that he would have been declared dead at the Bois-Grenier advanced dressing station (which was next to the site of the current Brewery Orchard Cemetery) and would not have been taken all the way back to Ft Rompu but rather left at Bois-Grenier for burial. I assume that if he was taken back to Ft Rompu and then died as Lycett described, his record would say 'died of wounds' rather than 'killed in action'.

Brewery Orchard Cemetery, Bois-Grenier, August 2014





AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P02615.003

Rev Capt John Lelean Cope, Chaplain 14th Battalion, who officiated at Tom's burial



Lt-Colonel Charles Moreland Montague Dare, Officer Commanding, 14th Battalion at the time of its first deployment in France.